Commentary

Volume Sixty-one, Number Three, March 1976

Is Peace Possible in the Middle East?

WALTER LAQUEUR

The Greening of American Foreign Policy

PETER L. BERGER

Homeless in the World

William Barrett

Drink & the American Writer

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Books in Review: Lionel Abel on Solzhenitsyn/Elinor Grumet/Stanley Rothman and Phillip Isenberg/Marc F. Plattner/Victor Baras/Peter P. Witonski

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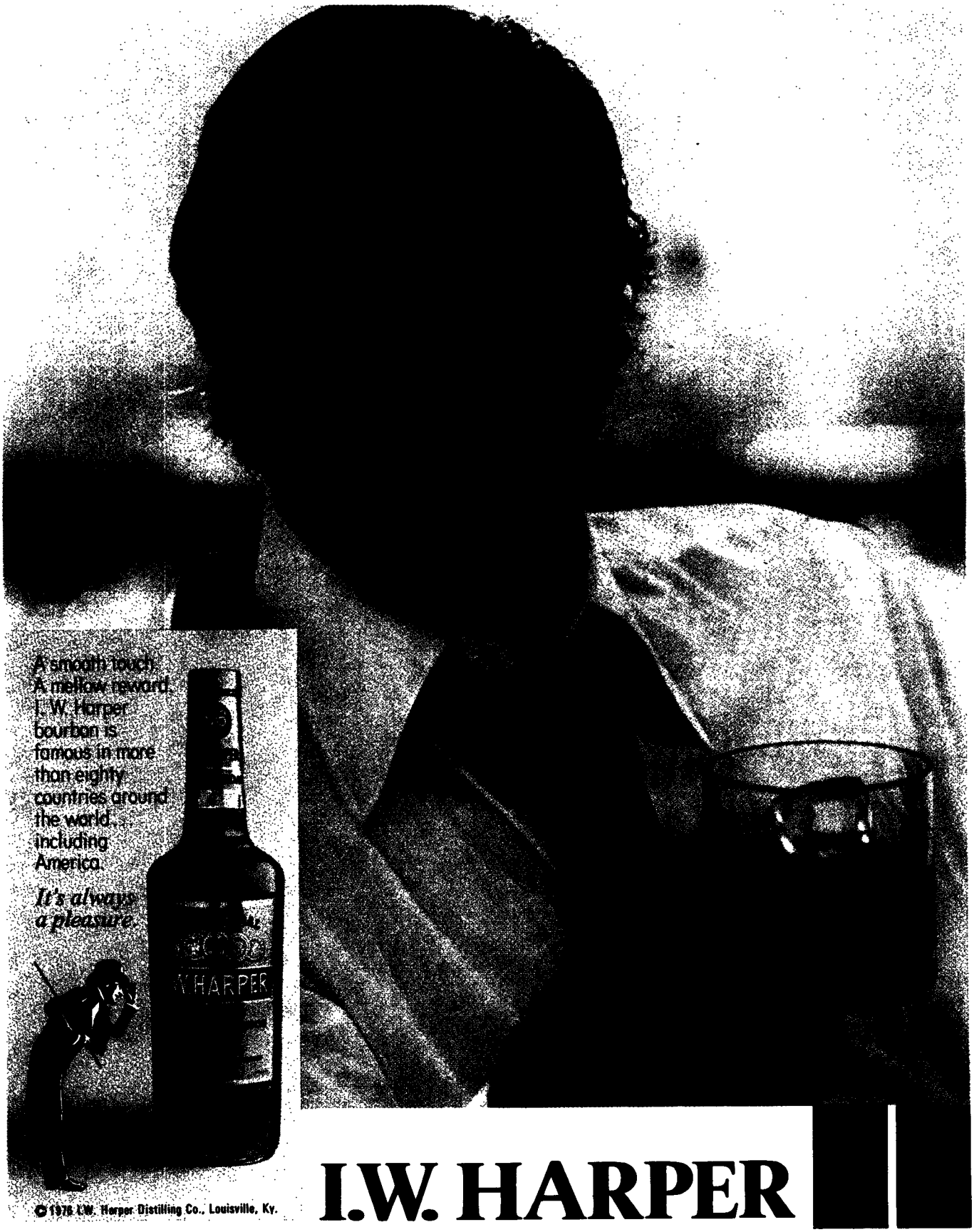

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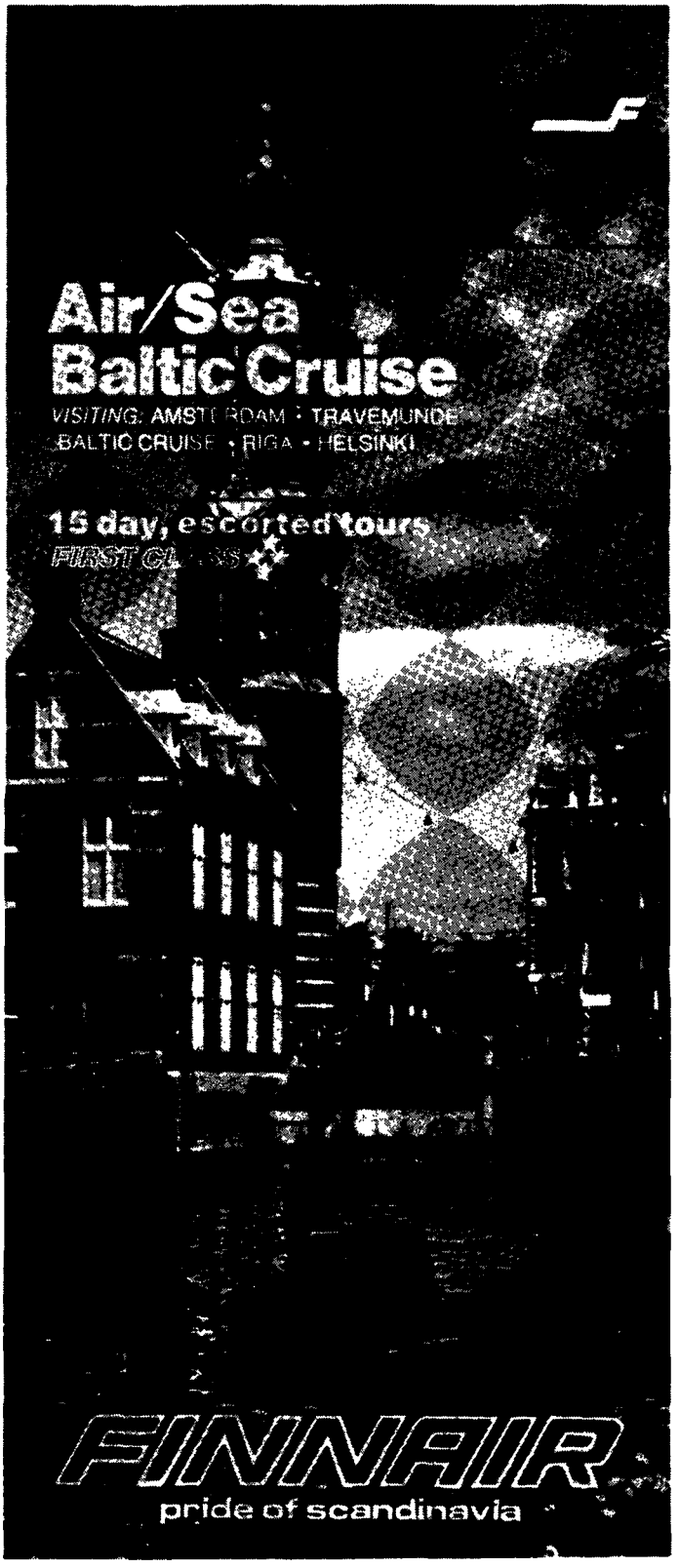

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Commentary

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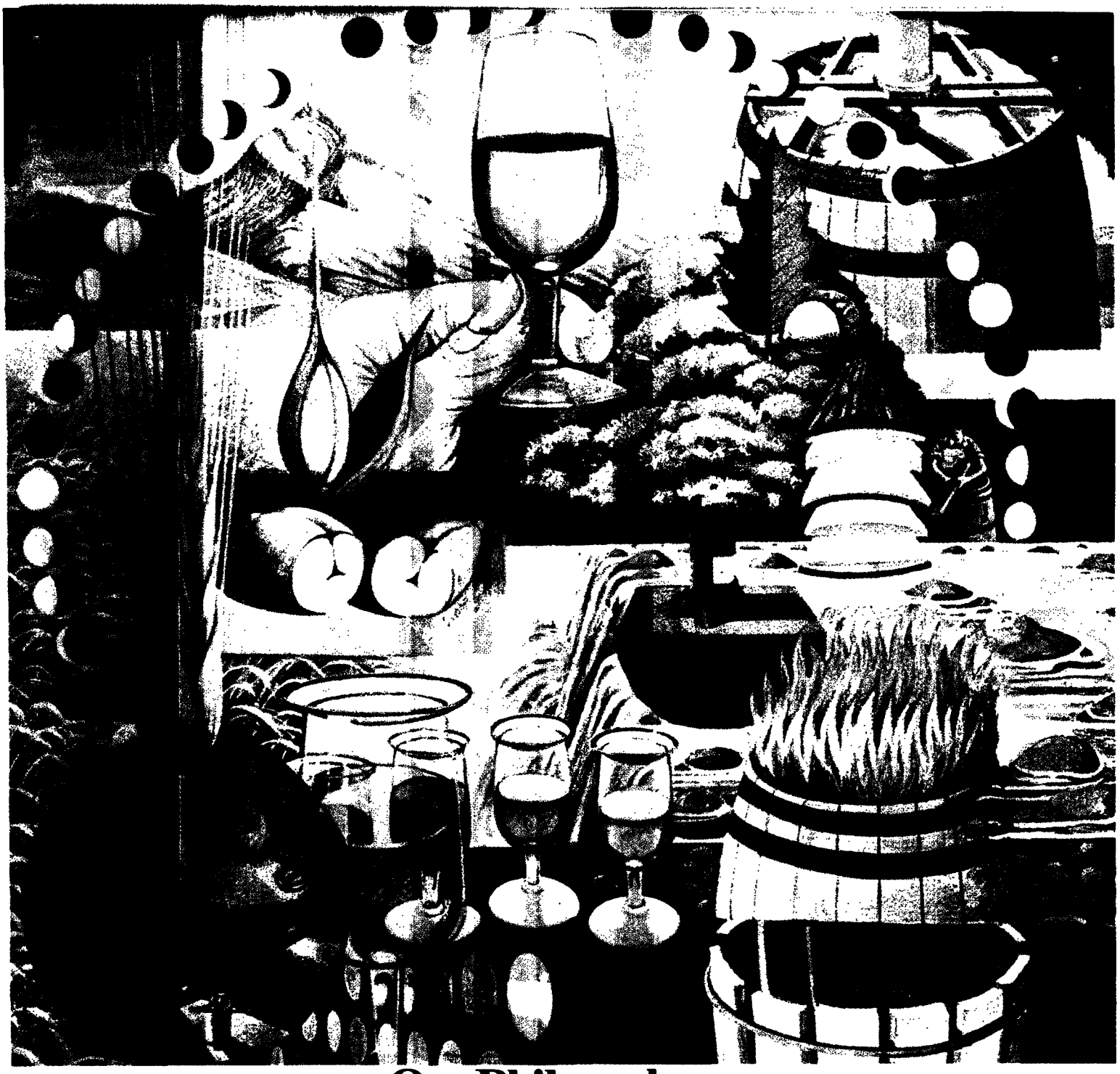

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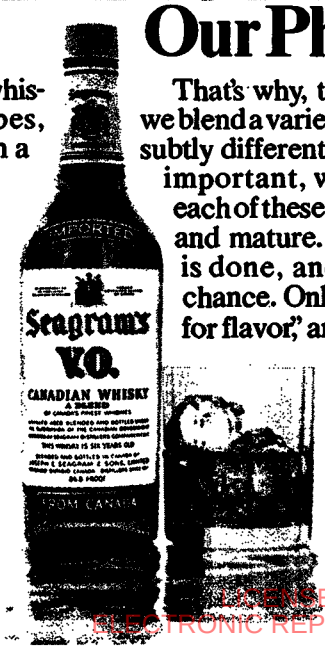

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Letters from Readers

On Slavery

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One test that a reader can make of a journal article is when he knows something from personal experience which is described in it. This is the case in regard to the assertion made by Stanley Elkins in "The Slavery Debate" [December 1975] that William Ryan made his critique of the Moynihan report "without having read it." As I provided Dr. Ryan, in my role as a staff member of CORE, with a copy of the report, I know on this point that Mr. Elkins is wrong. I trust the rest of his article is better grounded in fact.

ALAN GARTNER
New Human Services Institute
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Brer Rabbit seems to have outsmarted us once again and gotten Stanley Elkins to throw him out into the Briar Patch as "one nasty little hustler." He isn't a "nasty little hustler" but a big white slaveowner appearing as weak little Brer Rabbit so he won't be able to recognize himself:

> He steals or cheats the other animals [the black ones] out of more of their food than he needs [overworking and underfeeding them]; a lady [black] who resists his wooing he kills, skins, and smokes over hickory chips. He assembles his neighbors [for that is what the tenants of his adjoining slave quarters are] to help him [to put it kindly] build a spring house, and when this act of community is accomplished, he has them all drowned [so, brethren, let's not knock ourselves out on his projects; when we're no longer useful to him he'll get rid of us or let us die]. Brer Wolf seeks revenge upon Brer Rabbit (for having boiled Wolf's grandmother and tricked Wolf into eating her), whereupon Rabbit callously sacrifices his own wife [the slave woman with whom he has sired children] and children [mulattoes] to save himself.

The "complexity and ambiguity" and "levels of meaning" Mr. Elkins says Lawrence Levine insists on make it possible for Brer Rabbit to get past the censor not only "instructions on how the weak must make their way in a world of hypocrisy and superior power" but descriptions of the "gratuitous and purposeless" behavior of the slave masters. . . .

LUCILLE B. RITVO
Yale University
School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Slavery Debate" Stanley Elkins gives high praise to many writers in the field, but the back of his hand to Robert W. Fogel and Stanley Engerman, whose *Time on the Cross* was "the sensation of the 1974 publishing season" (Mr. Elkins's words).

In one sense the Fogel-Engerman work fits neatly into the categories established by Mr. Elkins to describe the ideological dilemma that has plagued American writers on slavery; it concentrates on the "achievement" of the slaves rather than their "immiseration." (The dilemma of course is how both could take place simultaneously.) But this is not the reason for Mr. Elkins's harsh critique; other authors with similar spirit (Herbert Gutman, for example) are given high marks. Nor, needless to say, is Mr. Elkins deluded (as Kenneth Clark was) into thinking that *Time on the Cross* is a defense of the slave system. Furthermore, I am convinced, it is not really the errors in the book which arouse his anger, for his review was kind to many differing authors, Phillips, Stampp, Genovese, Gutman (and maybe himself), authors so greatly at odds with one another that there must be an ample budget of error among them.

But the errors in Fogel and Engerman are referred to lovingly—a long footnote gives documentary references to attacks on the book Mr. Elkins cannot hope even to summarize—while the Fogel-Engerman enterprise itself is described as a public-relations campaign served by "an army of research assistants." Engerman is described as Fogel's "coadjutor," and Fogel himself is pictured dramatically crossing the oceans by air, giving interviews studded with bons mots, calling scholars to a Rochester conference on his book, and in general sounding more like T. H. White than a serious historian.

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Well, there is something to that: Fogel and Engerman are in fact economists, and I believe it is precisely this fact—and its implications for their view of historical inference—that occasions the rancor. As George Stigler, an economist and historian of economic doctrines, has pointed out, economists (unlike most other social scientists) tend to be "conservative" politically. By this he means anti- or non-Marxist. Historians, on the other hand, even where they are not overtly Marxist like Genovese, tend to take Marxist categories and viewpoints quite seriously. When a line of historical reasoning runs counter to some long entrenched Marxian view, they boggle; if in addition the argument requires a technical apparatus as formidable in its way as anything in those sciences the historian *admits* being ignorant of, like physics or biochemistry, they will be enormously tempted to pick out an exemplary error or two and declare all the rest of it pretentious hokum.

Thus the slavery debate is not only drawn along the "immiseration-achievement" axis described by Mr. Elkins, but with the entry of the cliometricians Fogel and Engerman it is drawn up along a new, unacknowledged axis whose poles might perhaps be named after Karl Marx and Adam Smith, in a first approximation.

I will come to examples in a moment, but should note first that this same new axis is visible in the current debate, mentioned by Mr. Elkins in the opening of his article, on the state of the working classes in England during the Industrial Revolution. What turns these researches into a "debate" is the long established, incorrect, and socialist-inspired myth that "the Industrial Revolution caused unspeakable misery . . ." (words by Bertrand Russell, 1951; music by Friedrich Engels, 1844).

Any economist can look at some of the available figures and soon conclude this notion to be false; many economists have indeed done so, and exhaustively, and long since (see Hayek, *Capitalism and the Historians*). The economic theories that govern these deductions are the same that in another context would lead to denial of the superiority of a managed economy to a market economy, even insofar as we have one in America today. To most American and English social historians such methods of deduction are couched in fighting words, capable perhaps of proving too that Andrew Carnegie did more for the poor than Eugene V. Debs.

Here, then, are two examples of where Mr. Elkins imagines he has caught Fogel and Engerman in typical errors, but which in fact illustrate the clash between established socialist prejudices and the non-Marxist analysis of the function of the marketplace.

1) Mr. Elkins writes: "For the superior 'efficiency' of Southern agriculture, the index [Fogel and Engerman] used was based not on volume of cotton per slavehand but on prices received for the product, which meant it could measure little more than profitability, a very different thing from efficiency."

But it *isn't* a very different thing. Efficiency is not measured by volume alone, but by value, that is, volume of that which has market value. Unless there is an artificial monopoly or subsidy or other interference with the market, this *is* measured by profit. The American South sold in an open world market. Its only "monopoly" of the cotton trade was the preeminence it had as a producer of cotton, having gotten there first with the best methods. That the slaveowners stole part of the fruit of this efficiency from their slaves is not relevant to this argument, which treats the profitability of the system as a whole.

One of the points of the Fogel-Engerman book was to counter the Genovese thesis that the South was a pre-capitalist, tradition-directed, paternalistic society, not driven by economic rationality. Fogel and Engerman prove that however it may have been driven, its results were exactly those the rational economic man would have striven for. To buttress this conclusion, what better definition of efficiency can there be than that which is measured by profit?

But profit as a measure of something good has stuck in the throats of socialists and other economic egalitarians for a century and more, so that today any identification of profit with something sounding like efficiency is either incomprehensible or tendentious-sounding to many a professional historian, Mr. Elkins apparently included. Mr. Elkins consequently points out as a flaw, or maybe an oversight, an identification Fogel and Engerman were deliberately trying to teach to non-economists.

2) Mr. Elkins writes: "A surprisingly large proportion of the 'evidence' [in *Time on the Cross*] was not quantitative at all, but came from traditional narrative sources. These too were garbled, otherwise they could not have yielded such strange assertions as . . . that Southern planters on the eve of the civil war were 'optimistic' about the future of slavery. . . ."

Mr. Elkins may be right about the examples I deleted from the above quotation, but about the optimism he is wrong. Fogel and Engerman not only have quantitative evidence, but they display it as a graph, under the engaging rubric Index of Sanguinity, with sanguinity plotted against time for the period 1830-60. The construction of this index is an easy and yet illuminating example of the economist's mind at work on a question that seems at first glance either to be imponderable or else amenable only to the uncertain study of narrative sources.

Did Fogel and Engerman read the diaries of planters and find 158 expressions of optimism and only 26 of pessimism? Did they add to this the corresponding data from Fourth of July orations and newspaper editorials? No. Had they done it this way the result would have been uncertain and perhaps totally wrong, no matter how many graphs and tables were provided. What they did find, for each five-year period between 1830 and 1860, were two numbers: the price of a slave (on average) on the auction block, and the rental price per year (on average) of that same slave. The ratio of these two numbers is, apart from details of scale, the Index of Sanguinity.

Thus if it were to cost only twice as much to buy a slave as to rent him for a year, the buyers of slaves are showing themselves not nearly as sanguine about the future of slavery as they would be in an era when a slave sold for five times his yearly rental. The actual price of a slave might change according to general economic conditions, but the ratio of his selling price to his rental price measures how long a future one expects that slave's productivity, whatever it is, to have. Fogel and Engerman found this ratio to have been higher in 1860 than in 1855!

The kind of reasoning that divides certain prices and calls the result "sanguinity" obviously rests on an economic theory of markets and

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competition, prices, profits, wages, and rents; and the theory used by Fogel and Engerman has no place in it for such cherished Marxian categories as "surplus value," or such ill- (if exhaustively-) defined notions as a "labor-content" theory of the value of a commodity.

Marx's view that "free" factory workers are being robbed of part of their product by their capitalist masters is widely, if often subliminally, held today; it is certainly held by those who support labor-union privileges as the proper device for "restoring the balance of economic power." But Fogel and Engerman calculate that the Negro slave was being deprived of only 10 per cent of his economic product. If a slave, bound hand and foot and guarded by dogs, can be made to lose no more than 10 per cent of his own (quite efficient) production, what then becomes of the Marxian analysis of the expropriations of ordinary capitalism?

No wonder, then, that *Time on the Cross* is singled out for a lambasting that not many other works of historical scholarship achieve. We have here a case of two cultures more violently divided in their way than the Two Cultures of C. P. Snow, since the latter two at least recognize each other and occasionally make a stammering effort at reconciliation.

One thing the members of the literary-historical culture almost never do is to force their own analyses into scientific matters. We get no guff about the psychological or social determinants of the range of validity of the Euler equations for the symmetric top in a uniform gravitational field, but when it comes to the corresponding researches of Ricardo, Marshall, and Kuznets there is no such reticence. No cure is in sight, either.

RALPH A. RAIMI
Department of Mathematics
University of Rochester
Rochester, New York

STANLEY M. ELKINS writes:

In *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, by Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, the authors say that early reactions to the report before its actual release "were largely reactions to the image derived from the newspaper coverage," and a little further on they quote William Ryan as saying, "All I knew was what was in the newspapers." But I am now persuaded by Alan Gartner's letter that this need not have precluded Ryan's obtaining an advance copy of the report before writing his critique, and that my own statement about Ryan, based on a misreading of the Rainwater and Yancey account, was therefore wrong.

Satisfying Lucille B. Ritvo on Brer Rabbit, however, may not be so easy. I share her regard for Rabbit's cunning, but as for his having "outsmarted us once again," being really the white master in disguise all along—well, I don't know. If that were the intention of the tales, it would be a very recent discovery. Maybe we can strike a balance between my doubts and her certainty. "The animals," according to Lawrence Levine, "were frequently almost perfect replicas of whites as slaves saw them. They occasionally worked but more often lived a life filled with leisure-time activities: they fished, they hunted, had numerous parties and balls, courted demure women who sat on verandas dressed in white. They mouthed lofty platitudes and professed belief in noble ideals but spent much of their time manipulating, oppressing, enslaving one another." Perhaps so, and we might thus argue with some plausibility that the slaves were simply projecting their tales onto the most attractive world they could imagine, that of the master class. Let us even grant that Brer Rabbit might be both master *and* slave, as Levine also suggests—sometimes one, sometimes the other. And yet the implications, when you start following them out, are somewhat distressing.

If the stories are to fulfill their didactic function, then the slave-pupil has to make some very sharp discriminations as they shift from level to level. He embraces some of Rabbit's attributes and actions as pertinent to his requirements, while perceiving that there are others (the master's traits) that he is being warned against. But the catch is that Brer Rabbit himself, playing either role, remains an undeniably engaging rascal throughout, at least for the tale-tellers and their audiences, and the evidence for that is abundant. It would seem, in other words, that the temptation to accept the whole fascinating package—power, brutality, trickery, and all the rest—might well have been overwhelming. I would just as soon not have it all that complicated. But no matter which way the tales are read—

I love my side of Barbados because there isn't anything I want to do that I can't do there.
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I can dance until the moon turns into the sun.
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whether the point of view is a single or a multiple one—the value-system that comes out of it is about the same. This is what I had in mind when I wrote that if the lore represents a psychic adjustment to slavery, "one is reluctant to take it as a very positive one."

Ralph A. Raimi argues that the harsh treatment received by *Time on the Cross* merely reflects the unwillingness of the "literary-historical culture" to give the tough-minded, statistically-oriented cliometricians a fair hearing. He is mistaken. For one thing, the most technical and systematic—and at the same time most devastating—critiques of the book have not been the work of "conventional" historians at all, but of the cliometricians themselves. For instance, two new volumes entirely devoted to *Time on the Cross*, one a special issue of *Explorations in Economic History*, and the other entitled *Reckoning with Slavery*, contain essays by Paul David, Richard Sutch, Peter Temin, Richard K. Vedder, and Gavin Wright—all cliometricians and all ruthlessly critical. For another, there is no question in my mind that any of the "literary" historians who responded in a hostile way to *Time on the Cross* (many, myself included, at first did not, and when they did change their minds they took their cues from the cliometricians, as well as from their own common sense), would have been delighted with any quantified data that could plausibly help them to get at the truth. Many, for that matter, are learning these techniques for themselves. The chief difficulty with *Time on the Cross* is not that its computations are too sophisticated for the "literary-historical culture," but rather that they are often too crude or too simplistic to deal adequately with the questions they address. Let us take two examples.

The first issue Mr. Raimi raises is the question of profitability as an accurate measure of efficiency. Fogel and Engerman insist that the key to the planters' success was their superior managerial skill and the superior work habits of their slaves. But to measure these purely by profit is to ignore the rising world demand for cotton in the late 1850's and the American South's virtual monopoly on large-scale production of that item. Most econometricians agree, however, that the demand for cotton reached its peak in 1860, and that if the war had not intervened its price would have dropped very sharply by 1861. Had this occurred, and had profits slumped drastically as they did in the mid-1840's, would we then conclude that the planters and their slaves had suddenly become *in*efficient? "Rather than telling us about relative technical efficiency," as David and Temin have put it, "Fogel and Engerman's findings really report on relative 'revenue-getting efficiency' (which is to say, on relative profitability) under a particular set of . . . conditions." No, the two are not the same at all, if we are to believe what is currently being said by a whole host of economists. To be sure, the slaves *may* have been very efficient workers, and most planters *may* have been highly skilled managers, but profitability alone cannot determine this.

The Index of Sanguinity raises a related, though not identical question. The difficulty, again, is hardly that of a methodological sophistication beyond the ordinary historian's grasp. The table, as Mr. Raimi himself points out, is based on a simple arithmetical calculation, the ratio between a slave's annual rental and his selling price. Since the ratio in 1860 was higher than in 1855, and much higher than in 1841, "clearly" the planters were growing ever more optimistic about the future of slavery. But were they really? There is a mountain of evidence—of a literary nature—that shows leading planters all over the South profoundly gloomy about the future of slavery under a Republican administration. Sufficiently so, as it turned out, that secession occurred in a matter of weeks after Lincoln's election. How does that fit with the Index of Sanguinity? Nor is the question simply a rhetorical one. The Index is an intriguing set of data; we don't know quite what it does mean, or whether "sanguinity" is the right designation for it, but it certainly *can't* mean that the planter class as a whole was wildly optimistic about slavery. In any case, when statistical evidence and literary evidence contradict each other, you don't simply throw out the literary evidence as unscientific, you try to resolve the contradiction. And yet what Fogel and Engerman seem to have assumed is that any quantifiable data, no matter how simplistic (the Index of Sanguinity being a prime case), can be substituted automatically for evidence of all other kinds. That, I fear, is no way to bring scientific precision to any undertaking, in either history or economics.

Finally, as to whether there are more Marxists among the literary-historical types than among economists, I may just dodge that one.

The Palestinians

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "The Palestinian Myth" [October 1975] David Gutmann endeavors to refute Dr. Walid El-Khalidi's statements in "Plan Dalet." Far from invalidating El-Khalidi's claims, however, Mr. Gutmann builds upon the old Zionist myth that the Palestinian Arabs are at fault for their condition of homelessness in 1948.

There is no doubt that Mr. Gutmann is correct in asserting that many Arabs in Palestine followed the exodus of "well-to-do" Arabs during the early months of 1948. However, the author neglects to reveal the telling evidence that Palestinian Arabs were both encouraged and forced to leave their homes in cities and villages—presumably because this does not conform to his conception of a spontaneous panic and departure.

Christopher Sykes (in *Crossroads to Israel*) wrote that in the latter months of 1948, "the exodus . . . was consciously and mercilessly helped on by Jewish threats and aggression toward Arab populations." Roving vans with loudspeakers blaring in Arabic were effectively utilized by both the Haganah and the Irgun. Arthur Koestler observed that the Arabs of Haifa were promised escort to "Arab territory" and loudspeakers "hinted at terrible consequences if the warnings were disregarded." Meyer Levin (*Jerusalem Embattled*) wrote that the message from the loudspeakers in Jerusalem was: "The road to Jericho is open! Fly from Jerusalem before you are all killed." Nathan Chofski, an early Jewish pioneer in Palestine, stated in William Zukerman's *Jewish Newsletter* (February 9, 1959): ". . . we, Jews, forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages . . . some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by deceit, lying, and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramla, Beersheba, Acre from numberless others."

According to "The Other Exo-

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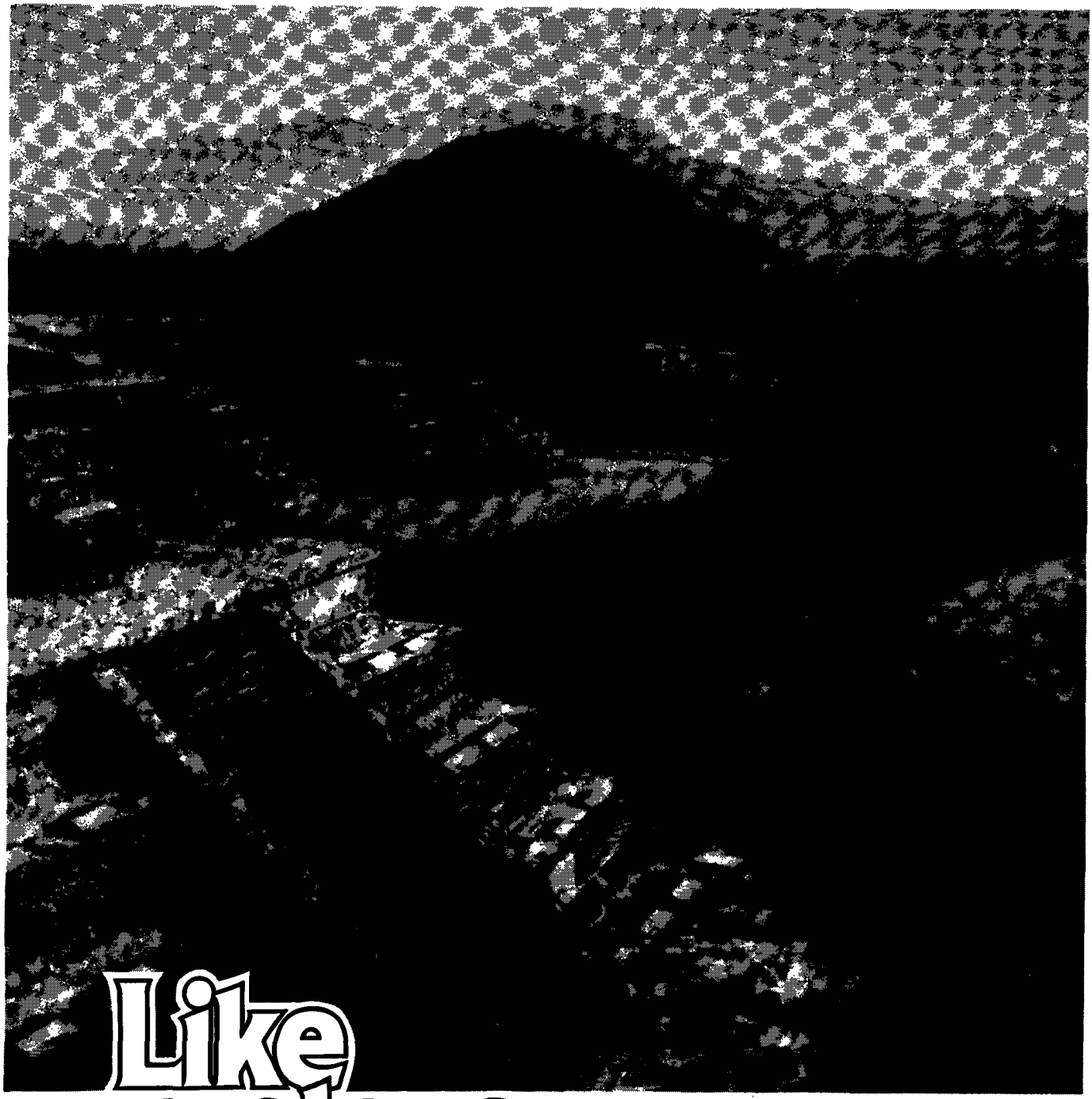

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dus" by Erskine Childers (London *Spectator*, May 12, 1961), a review of BBC monitoring of all Middle Eastern broadcasts in 1948 failed to produce any evidence that Arab radio stations, within or outside of Palestine, appealed to the Palestinian Arabs to evacuate. The evidence uncovered revealed that the Arabs were asked and also ordered to remain on their land in Palestine. The record also showed that on March 27, several days before the Haganah's drive against Arab population centers, the Irgun radio (broadcasting in Arabic) warned urban-centered Arabs that "typhus, cholera, and other diseases would be widespread in April and May." Two weeks later this "concern" for the health and welfare of the Palestinian Arabs was further illustrated by the murdering of more than 250 men, women, and children by the Irgun and Sternist forces at Deir Yassin.

Mr. Gutmann reduces Deir Yassin to an unimposing footnote in his article. Yet Menachem Begin, the commander of the Irgun terrorist group, wrote in *The Revolt* that the consequences of the slaughter at Deir Yassin caused Arabs to become "seized with limitless panic and [they] started to flee for their lives." Arthur Koestler called Deir Yassin "the psychologically decisive factor in this spectacular exodus." Journalist I. F. Stone, who covered the Arab-Jewish war of 1948, wrote in "For a New Approach to the Israeli-Arab Conflict" (*New York Review of Books*, August 3, 1967) that "Jewish terrorism, not only by the Irgun in such savage massacres as Deir Yassin but in milder form by the Haganah . . . encouraged Arabs to leave areas the Jews wished to take over for strategic or demographic reasons. They tried to make as much of Israel as free of Arabs as possible." . . .

Mr. Gutmann's disregard of the Zionist efforts which prompted much of the Palestinian Arab exodus incapacitates his article as a vehicle to explode the so-called Palestinian myth. The author utilizes the long-expressed Zionist myth of a voluntary Palestinian Arab flight (thereby reducing, if not completely eliminating, Zionist responsibility in displacing the Palestinian Arabs). Yasir Arafat's triumph in the United Nations was not, as Mr. Gutmann states, "a new myth." Violence and terror ushered in the Jewish state. Arafat is the logical extension of Menachem Begin and his ideological antecedents and adherents.

GARY V. SMITH
Alabama State University
Montgomery, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . David Gutmann writes that Reform rabbis are among those who circulate the lie "that Israelis stole the land from its rightful owners, the innocent Palestinians." To this statement I must take serious exception. Nowhere in the article does Mr. Gutmann mention the name of any Reform rabbi holding this point of view. Furthermore, in my capacity as an officer of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, an affiliate of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, I know that the official policy of the UAHC and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform Rabbis) is completely opposed to this "Palestinian myth."

I am very upset that Reform rabbis, who are in the forefront of support for Israel by all Americans, have been so maligned in this article. . . .

DAVID S. LEVINE
Merrick, New York

DAVID GUTMANN writes:

Like the Palestinians whose cause he champions, Gary V. Smith attacks a conveniently distorted version of the opposition. Indeed, his misstatement of the tenor and the very words of my article can in itself serve as an object lesson on the kind of mythification that has turned the Palestinians into media heroes. Thus Mr. Smith tells the readers of COMMENTARY that I am disqualified to speak on the Palestinians because of my "disregard of the Zionist efforts which prompted much of the Palestinian Arab exodus." I presume that Mr. Smith is honorable; but if so, he cannot read plain English. In my article I stated explicitly: "There is no doubt that Jews can fight as brutally as Christians or Arabs, and there is no doubt that in some cases they welcomed and even stimulated the Arab flight from Palestine." Also: "It was a dirty, nasty little war fought at close quarters by intertwined populations, Semitic cousins who had learned over fifty years to dislike and fear each other."

History is after all a tale of blood; and no people—Jew or Gentile—lives in history without dirty hands. Thus the War of Independence marked the point at which Jews reentered history as active and sometimes brutal participants rather than as "moral" though passive victims. But while I do not deny or excuse Jewish atrocities, I will not condone Mr. Smith's rewriting of history, as he attempts to prove that Jewish brutality was the main cause of the Arab disaster. In order to make this ugly charge stick, Mr. Smith not only exaggerates the importance of the Jewish war crimes—like Deir Yassin—that did take place; he invents some that never occurred. I will not, for example, be lectured by Mr. Smith as to what really happened in Haifa, where I spent a good deal of time during the War of Independence. The Arabs did end by leaving Haifa, but they began the war by attacking the Jewish sector of it. As part of their siege, all major roads into Jewish Haifa were brought under Arab fire; and the local British neither opened the roads nor permitted armed Jews of the Haganah to perform this vital task. However, when the British withdrew to their perimeter, and Haifa could be taken by the Haganah, I *know* that Jewish loudspeakers (one of them in the hands of my cousin, a Haganah intelligence officer) were employed to persuade fleeing Arabs to stay in the now-Jewish city. Despite a local history of Jewish-Arab cooperation, the Arabs still piled on the British LST's waiting to ferry them to Acre. As I said in my article: Jewish wishes for or against Arab flight did not much matter—the Arabs ran in either case. Clearly, the Arab flight from Haifa and elsewhere cannot be taken as *prima facie* evidence of Jewish aggression, any more than the postwar Allied presence in Berlin could be taken as evidence that the U.S., Britain, and Russia had committed unprovoked aggression against Hitler's Germany. But without doubt the refugee camps are full of ex-Haifaites, ready to tell their sympathizers how they were driven from their city by the overwhelming Jewish advantage in loudspeakers.

While Mr. Smith wants to make atrocities the issue, I did not choose to do so, even though I could have easily stuffed my paragraphs with the gruesome details of *Arab* massacres. The world has been helped to remember Deir Yassin; unrecorded now are the gross atrocities routinely committed against Jewish

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soldiers and civilians unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of Arab irregulars. (Haganah officers, who were not hysterical, dramatizing men, routinely advised us to keep a round or a grenade against the time when we might have to kill ourselves rather than fall captive to the Palestinian guerrillas.) My subject was not Arab violations of the rules of war, but the violation of history that Arabs and their supporters have triumphantly perpetrated: namely, the false story that the Jews, possessed of superior armament from the outset, and working from some great master plan, craftily engineered the Arab flight from Palestine. Finally, this is much more dangerous than accusing Jews of behaving as Gentiles usually do in *their* wars; this charge smacks of Jewish plots, grand designs, of the Elders of Zion manipulating poor benumbed peasants through their control of the media—the radios and the loudspeakers that Mr. Smith is so keen on. I was remembering a history; violent, confused, and morally ambiguous on both sides. Mr. Smith prefers the morality tale: bloody and devious Jews on one side; innocent, victimized Arabs on the other. In effect, Smith and his friends plead their cause by reviving, in modern dress, the images and dramas that have caused terrible mischief for Jews across the centuries: already the Palestinian Jew has been turned into the "Zionist"—Shylock armed; while the innocent Palestinian Arab, as the most recent victim of the Palestinian Jew, has entered the niche previously reserved for Jesus Christ. It is only a few years ago that Pope John XXIII officially exculpated the Jews of deicide; now we find the Palestinians and their supporters busily legislating Deir Yassin into the new Golgotha.

I think David Levine should relax. In the sentence that he excitedly objects to I was documenting the wide reach of the Palestinian myth by pointing out that it had even been taken up by "some alienated Israelis, Reform rabbis, and American Jewish students." I was not referring to an organizational entity: "some" qualifies "Reform rabbis," just as it does the other categories. I was referring to a *type* of person, probably well known to Mr. Levine, who I believe is more apt to be found among Reform than among Conservative or Orthodox Rabbis. The Reform ranks are more likely to contain rabbis who demonstrate their "liberal" credentials, their purity of conscience, and their capacity to transcend "parochial" loyalties by preaching "Justice for the Palestinians." Though meaning well, they thereby imply that the Palestinians were the targets of a *special* injustice, over and above the usual brutalities and misfortunes of war. Whether they mean to or not, their rhetoric bolsters the myth that the Palestinians were the victims of a Zionist grand design to steal their land. But I don't mean to belabor a minor point; I apologize to any Reform rabbis, particularly those who are unambivalent in their support for Israel, whom I might have offended.

The Presidency

To the Editor of Commentary:

What is most remarkable about Paul Weaver's discussion of liberal attitudes toward the "strong Presidency" ["Liberals and the Presidency," October 1975] is that he should be taking them so seriously. Having explained "their extraordinary about-face" quite accurately in terms of a strategic "purpose of mobilizing opposition to the particular presidential policies responsible" for Vietnam and Watergate, he dismisses such an explanation as inadequate, since "the attitude has long acquired a life of its own." Of course it has! Those liberal thinkers Mr. Weaver has in mind wouldn't want us to think of them as mere partisans, would they? Thus they speak in generalizations of institutions rather than the men who occupy them and the immediate political consequences of their incumbency.

Much of Mr. Weaver's problem can be explained by the determination of writers he is criticizing to take their own arguments seriously. Indeed, many liberals were quite willing to support Roosevelt's attempt to emasculate the Supreme Court in the 1930's in the name of lofty political theory. But with the liberal advocacy of judicial activism during the era of the Warren Court, is there any longer a doubt that arguments on behalf of a

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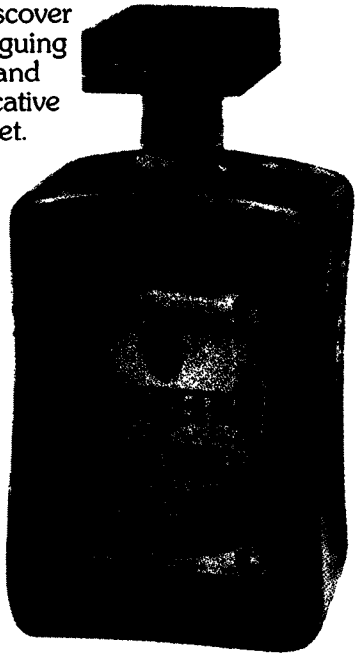

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strong Court are related to calculations of how five or more justices are likely to behave? Or, for that matter, that cries for congressional reform represent little more than attempts to get the right people into positions of influence? In short, their sometimes inspiring rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, liberal theoreticians are essentially pragmatists: when they see their interests given short shrift at some point in the system, they are likely to take their business elsewhere.

What Mr. Weaver fails to appreciate is the extent to which even members of this "new class" realize that the biggest prize the system can offer is still the Presidency. Although it may have looked like it at times, the McGovern campaign was not always intentionally suicidal. And, as Mr. Weaver's own about-face in his final paragraph suggests, liberals are hardly wedded to either the congressional or executive bureaucracy. Ultimately, the "liberal Presidency" is certain to reemerge the next time a liberal President takes the oath of office.

DAVID E. LOWE
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The emphasis of Paul Weaver's article is misplaced. The question he might have considered is whether the American people—not just liberals—want an "imperial President."

Mr. Weaver's failure to view "the new liberal anti-presidentialism" as a phenomenon emerging from the crucible of the Nixon Presidency indicates a susceptibility to liberal rhetoric. . . . Mr. Weaver fails to take into account the deep fear held by liberals of a Richard Nixon elected with more than 60 per cent of the vote. . . .

The second Nixon term got under way with the liberals in Congress, the bureaucracy, and the press arrayed against the President. Even before the second term, Daniel P. Moynihan had pointed out in the March 1971 issue of COMMENTARY:

> A third circumstance working to upset the old balance of power between the Presidency and the press is the fact that Washington reporters depend heavily on more or less clandestine information from federal bureaucracies which are, frequently, and in some cases routinely, antagonistic to presidential interests.

And indeed, with the second term, influential newspapers and bureaucrats become routinely antagonistic to President Nixon, and worked in close alliance to undermine his position, one blatant example being the disclosure of Nixon's tax returns. Considering the solidarity of the forces arrayed against him, it is not surprising that Nixon was forced from office and, indeed, the very fact of his resignation belies the assertion that he was an "imperial President." . . .

The test of liberal attitudes toward "imperial Presidents"—such is our political vocabulary that "imperial Presidents" are not so described by their supporters—is met by asking liberals how they view the concentration of power in the hands of one man—one man, that is, like FDR, or HST, or JFK. Liberals are not as distrustful of power when it resides in such hands. . . .

But the question remains: do the American people want a President to have vast power even if he has liberal support? . . . That is, has Watergate suggested to the American people that *all* Presidents are worthy of their distrust and, rhetoric aside, may like the idea of power for its own sake, whether the

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President is Roosevelt, or Truman, or Eisenhower, or Kennedy, or Johnson, or Nixon, or even Gerald R. Ford? Have the American people finally come to realize, this bicentennial year, that the person they elect is merely the nation's chief executive officer—not a monarch, not even an emperor—and one of their peers?

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
Bronx, New York

PAUL WEAVER writes:

What my correspondents seem to be arguing is that there is no such thing as liberal doctrine—only a liberal hunger for power that clothes itself in disingenuous rationalizations that shift with every shift in the political situation. No doubt this is true of many liberals (and others) today. To some extent, it may also be true of American liberalism down through the years; I don't know, and I wish somebody would study the question. But my article didn't address itself to this question and doesn't stand or fall on the answer.

What it does depend on is the proposition that liberal ideas, whatever their origin or quality, have consequences and must be taken seriously. My correspondents dispute this proposition, but of course they are wrong. Ideas *always* have consequences, are indeed the heart of political experience itself. What's more, the particular ideas I discussed have had—are still having—large and observable effects, from the congressional assault on Turkey to campaign-finance "reform" and the rise of the public-interest-law movement. In the circumstances, my correspondents' blithe dismissal of the new liberal anti-presidentialism is hard to fathom. It is rather as if they were saying that only good ideas merit examination, and that bad or disingenuous ones never matter—which is nonsense.

Finally, to David R. Zukerman, I would say that while it is true that the President is neither "monarch" nor "emperor," he has never been "merely the nation's chief executive officer," nor should he be. The Constitution makes him a central participant in the policy-*making* process, too. Once upon a time, our extra-constitutional institutions gave him the power to make good on his constitutional responsibilities. They no longer do so, and the capacity of government to govern, whether in behalf of liberal or conservative ends, is thereby diminished. That is why, unlike Mr. Zukerman, I would hope in this bicentennial year for renewed recognition of our need for a strong Presidency and renewed support for the persons, ideas, and institutions under whose aegis it would be restored.

Interpreting the Bible

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As one who has studied both literature in general and the Hebrew Bible, I was delighted and enriched by Robert Alter's article, "A Literary Approach to the Bible" [December 1975]. His subtle and sensitive reading of the episode of Judah and Tamar is a persuasive argument in behalf of the method he advocates. I should like, however, to correct some misrepresentations and false impressions his article leaves behind.

First, a bibliographical note. Erwin Good's *Irony in the Old Testament* is not the only book-length study of the Hebrew Bible from a literary perspective. S. D. Goitein's *Iyyunim BaMikra* ("Bible Studies") is another, a book which very much needs an English translation. Goitein's analysis of the Scroll of Ruth therein is a masterpiece. Another example, more technical, is Norbert Lofink's *Das Hauptgebot* ("The Principal Commandment"), a sophisticated study of Deuteronomic rhetoric. One might also note a growing number of articles, of which one of the best is D. N. Freedman, "The Structure of Psalm 137" (in Hans Goedicke, ed., *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*). I should also point out that it did not require an authority in general poetics to discredit the absurdly complex systems of scansion which some biblical scholars, influenced unduly by Greek forms, have advocated. These systems have never been widely adopted. Today, largely because of fruitful comparisons with Canaanite poetry, the emphasis is on parallelism of half-lines, measured by rough syllable count (the method of Frank Cross) or by tabulation of syntactic units.

More seriously, I am troubled by Mr. Alter's belief that contemporary biblical research, except as it involves exploration of the Semitic background, is still principally concerned with the isolation and identification of documents, as it was a century ago. It should be noted that source criticism has never been an end in itself, but only a means of getting at the raw data out of which one can reconstruct the history of the religion of Israel. Thus the focus of source critics, who are "literary critics" in the biblical sense, has always been on history (and the theology of history) rather than on "literary criticism" in Mr. Alter's sense. His continual setting of literary analysis in the broader sense in opposition to biblical scholarship as he understands it is a comparison of apples and oranges. A more productive comparison is between literary criticism in the general sense and what biblical scholars call form criticism, for which questions of genre, structure, fiction, etc., are preeminent. Examination of the works of men like Gunkel, von Rad, Westermann, Koch, Childs, and Coats, to name but a few, considerably mitigates (but does not destroy) Mr. Alter's severe judgment on biblical scholarship.

The second troubling aspect of his article is Mr. Alter's opinion that historical scholars very often believe that the final composition produced from antecedent sources has no literary significance of its own, being a product of a "manic tribal compulsion . . . to include units of traditional materials that made no connective sense." The fact is quite to the contrary. Redaction studies are now an old tradition, one that thrives today. One need only consider the insistence of Brevard Childs in his recent Exodus commentary upon a rigorous treatment of the "canonical" form to get a sense of the importance placed today upon the final product of the literary process. Like Mr. Alter, I would not want to see this concern grow to the point at which the pre-history of the text is perceived as literarily (and religiously) irrelevant. It is important that the traditional theological concept of canon not be imported uncritically into literary discussions, as those unskilled in the biblical disciplines are wont to do. If it is not, then source criticism and form criticism will provide a rich grist for the analytical mills of men like Robert Alter. If the Hebrew Bible is, in Mr. Alter's words, "a complete interfusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiosophical vision," then the history of the text (and for that matter, the text as history) cannot be sacrificed

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on the altar of aesthetic analysis or "close reading." One can, and should, apply Mr. Alter's method at all stages of the process of transmission. I see no motivation other than traditional bias to limit its application to the final redaction of the Masoretic version.

In conclusion, having spoken inordinately of my disagreements with an article I very much admire, I should like to stress my agreement with Mr. Alter's and Joel Rosenberg's conviction that literary analysis is inextricably associated with a religious understanding of Scripture. Such a conviction is imperative for anyone who would advance the cause of Torah into the 20th and 21st centuries.

JON D. LEVENSON
Department of Religion
and Biblical Studies
Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter's analysis of the story of Judah and Tamar contains several impressive insights; the trouble is that virtually all of them are found in classical rabbinic literature.

The central observation that Judah was repaid for asking his father to recognize the bloody tunic by being asked to recognize the pledge he had left with Tamar is found in Babylonian Talmud *Sotah* 10b, Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* 84, 85, Midrash *Aggadat Bereshit,* and *Targum Jonathan ad loc.* That Judah was "exposed through the symbols given in pledge for a kid (*gedi 'izim*), as before Jacob had been tricked by the garment dipped in the blood of a goat (*se'ir 'izim*)," is noted in *Bereshit Rabbah* 84 and in Rashi *ad loc.* The relationship between the "going down" of Judah and that of Joseph is pointed out in *Bereshit Rabbah* 85.

Mr. Alter does indicate in parentheses that "traditional exegesis in its own way" engaged in literary analysis of the Bible, but it did so on the basis of dogmatic assumptions which he cannot accept. Such assumptions, however, clearly do not justify the ignoring of this material, and Mr. Alter's evident failure to glance at the Midrash or even at Rashi in formulating an original piece of exegesis reflects the disastrous tendency of modern biblical scholarship to regard premodern works as virtually without value. . . .

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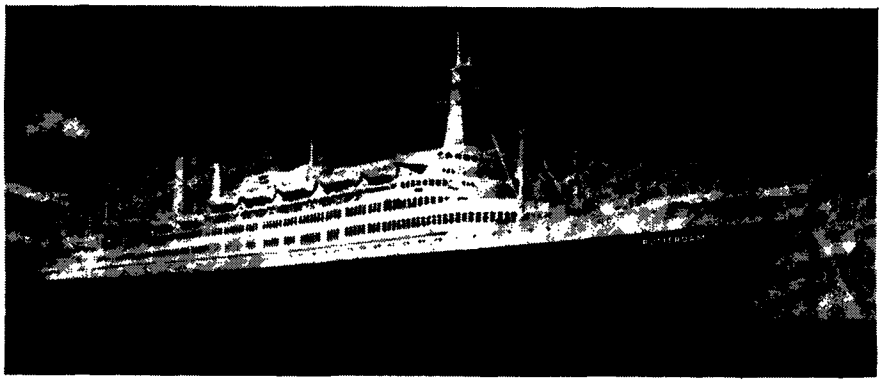

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The failure of contemporary Pentateuchal criticism to utilize the method outlined by Mr. Alter is, as he indicates, no accident, but I think that he underestimates the impact of such literary analysis on the documentary hypothesis. You can allow the "redactor" just so much freedom of action before he turns into . . . an author using various traditions as "raw material." Such an approach must ultimately shake the foundations of the regnant critical theory, not merely tinker with its periphery.

It is therefore not surprising that Mr. Alter's points about Genesis 38 appear (with acknowledgment of the midrashic sources) in an article by Umberto Cassuto, who rejected the documentary hypothesis. (See *Ziyyunim: Kovez LeZikhrono shel Y.N. Simhoni,* 1929, and the summary by Y. Jacobson in his popular work *Binah BaMikra.*) Cassuto, in fact, uses a very similar method of analysis in other contexts as well, and while Mr. Alter may be inclined to dismiss the midrashic approach as frequently extravagant and undisciplined, the same cannot be said of Cassuto's use of such methodology.

In short, it should give us pause when the showcase illustration of what is billed as practically a brand-new approach to the Bible turns up in the Midrash, in medieval times, and in a forty-six-year-old article by a modern scholar. . . .

DAVID BERGER
Department of History
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Without wishing to detract from the overall importance of Robert Alter's emphasis upon the literary approaches to the Bible, . . . I wonder if some mention should have been made of the midrashic approach to the Bible, which always assumed connections of theme and motif between contiguous portions. While the Rabbis may not have recognized a literary category as such, their sensitivity to "verbal repetitions and syntactical peculiarities" prompted them to observe things which we today call literary devices. There are a number of biblical scholars, influenced by rabbinic Midrash, who manifest a strong literary orientation in their work. These include Martin Buber, D. T. Hoffman, B. Jacob. Umberto Cassuto, and more recently S. D. Goitein, A Kariv, and N. Leibowitz. . . .

SHUBERT SPERO
Cleveland College of
Jewish Studies
Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter laments that "at this late date there exists virtually no serious literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible." Yet the work of Nehama Leibowitz, whose *Studies in the Book of Genesis* has been ably translated by Aryeh Newman (World Zionist Organization for Torah Education and Culture, Jerusalem, 1972) is clear evidence that literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible is alive and flourishing. Indeed, as Dr. Leibowitz's writings clearly show, such literary analysis has been alive and flourishing for at least two thousand years. The accuracy of this assertion is attested by the commentaries of Rashi (1040-1105) and Rabbi Hama bar Hanina (3rd-4th century) on the Judah and Tamar story analyzed by Mr. Alter. . . . Rabbi Hama bar Hanina (Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 10b) comments on the use of *haker-na* ("please recognize") which occurs when Joseph's brothers show Joseph's coat to Jacob and again when Tamar shows the seal, cord, and staff to Judah: "With the word *haker-na* he [Judah] brought the news to his father—please recognize your son's coat—and with the word *haker-na* they brought the news to him—please recognize to whom the seal, cord, and staff belong."

Both Rashi and Rabbi Hama bar Hanina have anticipated Mr. Alter.

GERSHON HEPNER
Hershey, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to add to Robert Alter's excellent but far-too-short article that a definitive work along the lines he suggests requires in addition to a literary perspective a knowledge of talmudic, midrashic, and later homiletic rabbinic literature. . . . In *Bereshit Rabbah* 85, for example, Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman analyzes the literary and religious importance of *vayehi ba'et hahi,* "at about that time," and *vayered me-et,* "he went down from," precisely as Mr. Alter does and he further develops the idea of a "divine scheme." In the use of the verb *vayered* ("he went down") all rabbinic commentators detect the meaning of "he was demoted" from his former position of importance. Mr. Alter carries this idea one step further and points out the association of this verb with *vayered Mizrayim,* "and he went down to Egypt," used in the Bible in connection with Jacob's trip to Egypt.

A surprising parallel is also drawn between Potiphar and Tamar. Rabbi Nahman suggests that Potiphar's intent to have intercourse with Joseph was just as meritorious as Tamar's since Potiphar's desire was not prompted by sexual lust but by the wish to have "worthy progeny" from Joseph.

In all three stories, "garments" are used for the purpose of deceit but with different results. The biblical author thus emphasizes God's preconceived plans of which the characters in the stories are unaware. . . .

DAVID NEWMAN
Toronto, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I don't know when I've read an article of more interest than Robert Alter's "A Literary Approach to the Bible." Below are some of my own observations. . . .

The Speiser Genesis claims that there are two Joseph stories carelessly spliced together because a Midianite caravan finds Joseph before the Ishmaelite one which is seen by Joseph's brothers. . . . But anyone familiar with desert and semi-desert terrain like that of the Near East or West Texas would find nothing disconcerting in these passages. One can see a single person approaching many miles away and yet an army could pass undetected behind mid-distant foothills or even close by. The space perceptions in such terrain are startlingly different from anything one encounters in northern climates where biblical criticism seems to thrive. There is no doubt in my mind that there were two separate caravans, one far and seen, another close by and undetected. . . .

Judah's admission of wrongdoing when confronted with the evidence of his misdeeds to Tamar parallels David's admission of wrong when confronted by Nathan for the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.

Finally, Mr. Alter describes Joseph's garment as "emblematic of his (Jacob's) love for Joseph. . . ." But . . ., as recently discovered texts make clear, it was also the mark of rank and title, thus paralleling even more strongly that Mr. Alter indicates the subsequent unmasking of

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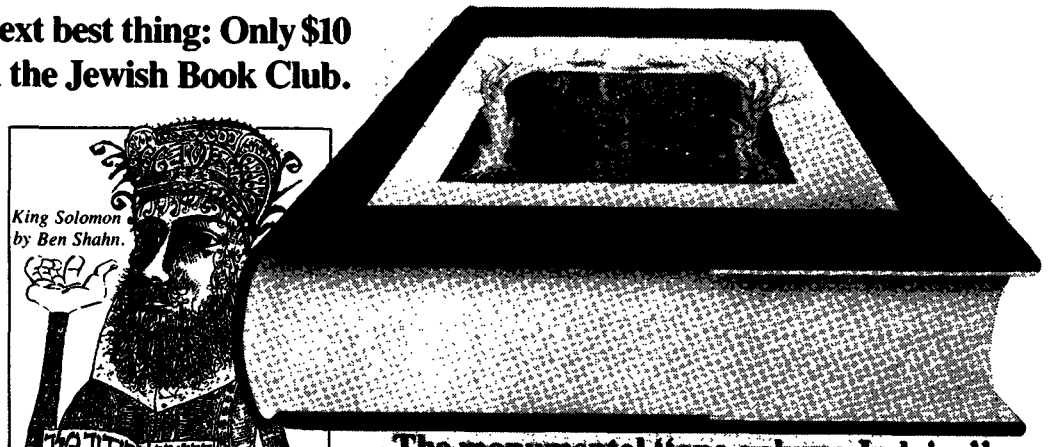

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Judah by Tamar. . . . It was not the beauty of the coat which angered Joseph's brothers, but its meaning in relation to their own inheritance. Judah, too, was trapped by the "seal, cord, and staff," the very symbols of his title and inheritance. . . .

MAURICE SCHMIDT
Texas A & I University
Kingsville, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter's article on the Judah-Tamar story provides excellent support for his contention that a full understanding of the biblical text cannot be gained without a disciplined literary analysis. . . . In making his telling points against biblical scholars, with their lack of concern and sophistication in literary analysis, and professors of English, with their inability to work with the Hebrew text and ignorance of ancient Near Eastern culture, Mr. Alter criticizes our recently published *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, heedless of the audience at which it is aimed.

In fact, four of the nine contributors to the volume are able to work with the original Hebrew text. The book is intended to provide analysis of the Bible for teachers of literature, and Mr. Alter does not seem to be cognizant of, or sympathetic with, the needs of teachers who must work with the Bible in English translation.

Two of the essays in our book also touch on the Tamar-Judah story and make, I think, quite valid points which further enhance an understanding of the story's function in the Jacob-Joseph narrative. Among these: the garment used to deceive and trap (Jacob-Isaac, Leah-Jacob, Joseph's brothers-Jacob, Tamar-Judah); the juxtaposition of Tamar and Potiphar's wife as sexual types; the demand/offering of a pledge against fulfillment of a promise (Tamar-Judah, Joseph-his brothers, Judah-Jacob, Judah-Joseph); the conflicting themes of wasting life/spilling seed (Joseph's brothers, Onan, the baker's dream) and preserving life (Tamar, the butler's dream, Joseph, and Judah). These insights go beyond "rhapsodic paraphrase or the delineation of recurrent patterns, real and imagined."

Like it or not, there is a gap between the goals of scholarship and the reality of the classroom situation. A scholar will feel that not to understand as much as possible about the piece of literature is to distort and violate it and to encourage superficiality. Granted that classroom teachers will always fail to transmit to the students all that they know about a piece of literature, and that they have an obligation to push their students as far as the students and the goals of the course will allow. But insisting too much on scholarly background and on working with the text only in the original either will encourage students to think that reading skills consist of solving riddles one by one and that literary analysis requires initiation into a mystery and/or will discourage students from enjoying reading.

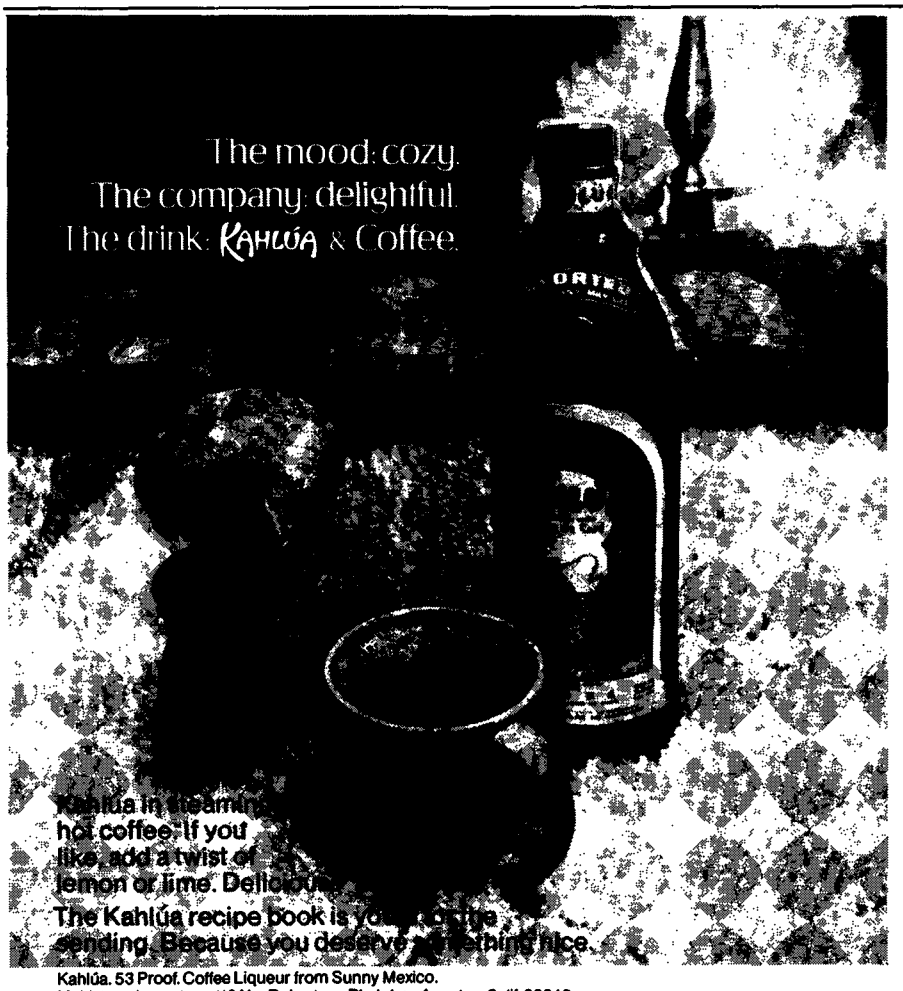
Is Mr. Alter saying that one should not attempt to teach literature in translation? Must teachers know the ancient languages, the original documents, the religious and scholarly commentaries, before they can engage in literary analysis with their classes? Or may they venture forth, checking along the way with scholars, to make sure that they are not way out of line? Must teachers explain to their students the Hebrew behind the text and the meaning of the concepts in their ancient contexts? Or may students be allowed to go ahead with the text, with only enough glossing to see that they don't get into serious trouble?

For too long literary critics have been scared away from the Bible, fearful of making an obvious error because they do not control the original sources of ancient Near Eastern and Israelite culture. With all due respect to the contributions of scholars who can work with the original, one need not regard literary analysis of the Bible as a sacred mystery to be engaged in only by the initiated. . . .

JAMES S. ACKERMAN
Department of Religious Studies
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

ROBERT ALTER writes:

Since most of the letters raise the same objection about the anticipation of my analysis in rabbinic sources, I would like to clarify and qualify what I said, far too briefly, on the relation of traditional exegesis to a literary understanding of the Bible. The rabbinic commentaries should clearly not be cast aside in a casual parenthesis, as I



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did. They are full of probing insights into the literary art of the biblical text, but they are also tilted along a rather special bias, as I wrote, "by far-reaching assumptions about the text as literal revelation." Particularly in the case of the classical Midrashim, their genius is precisely to uncover connections between seemingly disparate segments of the text, and so it would have been very surprising if an explicit formulaic recurrence like that of *haker-na* or the two usages of *yarod*, to go down, would have escaped midrashic detection. One problem, however, with this same midrashic approach is its penchant for seeing connections absolutely everywhere, on the assumption that the entire biblical corpus constitutes an endlessly self-referential system of divinely revealed truth existing in the simultaneity of an exegetical eternity. In other words, the brilliant perceptions that the Midrash sometimes affords us are part and parcel of a method of reading which is, in David Berger's apt words, "frequently extravagant and undisciplined."

I would grant that the traditional exegetes can provide invaluable *points of departure* for a literary analysis of the Bible—in the case of my own discussion of Genesis 38, a more proper procedure would have been to check the rabbinic sources and footnote any parallel observations. I suspect, however, that the advocates of midrashic interpretation, in the fashion of good yeshiva students, tend to confuse a *hidush*—a supposedly new insight into a particular word or phrase—with an integral way of reading a continuum of the text as a literary unit. I did not really imagine, in commenting on the story of Tamar and Judah, that I was seeing connections which had absolutely eluded all the millions of very keen eyes that have been scrutinizing the Bible these many centuries. Any claim to freshness in my approach was in using the connections I perceived to develop a more complex sense of how style, character, motive, theme, and narrative situation interact in the story. I still maintain that these considerations are at best only intermittently touched on in the Midrash, with its avowedly homiletic purpose; and so I cannot agree with Mr. Berger that the kind of insights I was trying to point toward are "virtually all . . . found in classical rabbinic literature" simply because three specific verbal recurrences were noted before me by the rabbis.

Thus, when the Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* (85:12, my translation), quoting Rabbi Yokhanan, records: "The Holy One proclaimed to Judah, 'You said to your father, *please recognize*, I swear that Tamar will say to you, *please recognize*,'" it presents the recurrence of *haker-na* as a simple didactic tit-for-tat, the message pointedly delivered to the culprit by God himself. This sort of neat moral retaliation was part, but only part, of my reading of the story. What I was trying to suggest, beyond that, was a set of finely adjusted ironies intended to be perceived by the reader about the character, in which multiple parallels, oppositions, and differences are simultaneously transmitted through the artful condensation of a single phrase. Such a literary sense of the purpose of the text and how that purpose is realized in a narrative dynamic differs from the didactic theology which the Midrash, whatever its imaginative flashes, finally conceives the Bible to be.

As for other modern literary discussions of the Bible, I appreciate the various suggestions letter-writers have made, and I am sure there must be some things of worth that have escaped my attention, but I am not especially impressed with the particular candidates proposed, at least not in terms of my own spectrum of models for professionally serious literary criticism. Cassuto's sensitive commentaries on Genesis and Exodus are as helpful as any by a modern biblical scholar, but they are finally tendentious (and quite unconvincing) in their unswerving dedication to the refutation of the documentary hypothesis, and they by no means consistently perform the same function of disciplined literary illumination as, say, Ian Watt's analysis of the beginning of *The Ambassadors*, Cedrick Whitman's discussion of the structure of the Iliad, G. Wilson Knight's observations on the verse-music of *Othello*.

The same general reservation would apply, for different reasons, to Nehama Leibowitz's pedagogically admirable adaptations of rabbinic exegesis and to S. D. Goitein's pleasant but methodologically primitive work of popularization (and I cannot conceive how Goitein's sketchy comments on Ruth could be thought of as a "masterpiece"). I am puzzled as to why Jon D. Levenson thinks the biblical form critics qualify as literary analysts in my sense. I agree that a good deal more than source analysis is going on in the field today, but form criticism is only another stage of "excavative" activity, devoted to the hypothetical reconstruction of ancient literary conventions, the identification of supposed generic strands in the text, and so forth, and as such it is chiefly an ancillary step to what I would call literary criticism proper. On biblical prosody, my point about the Hrushovski article was not simply that it discredited inappropriate systems of scansion but that, going considerably beyond syllable counts and the tabulation of syntactic units, it used a sophisticated understanding of poetics to characterize and illustrate analytically the nuanced formal means of biblical poetry.

As for *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narrative*, which James Ackerman helped to edit, I of course could not do justice to a volume of seventeen essays in a short footnote, but, despite some perceptive observations by a few of the contributors, I still find the level of the discussions disappointing. I entirely agree that literature can be taught in translation, and by teachers unable to read the original, but my view is that even high-school teachers of Bible will receive the most useful guidance from literary analyses based on a sound understanding of the Hebrew, like Mr. Ackerman's own contribution to the volume.

In any event, I am grateful to Messrs. Levenson, Schmidt, Newman, and Berger, as well as to all those who have written to me directly, for their generous comments on my article. The response suggests that there is a felt need for more discussions of the kind I attempted, whatever the debate over possible antecedents and analogues.

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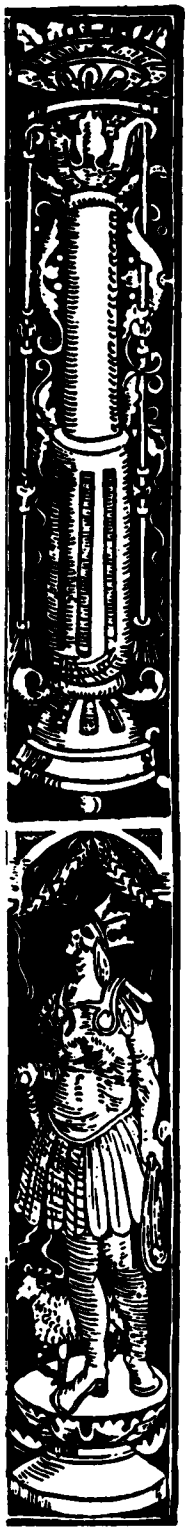

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The Greening of American Foreign Policy

Peter L. Berger

NEARLY everyone agrees that Vietnam represents a watershed in American foreign policy. Then the interpretations diverge. Some would see these events as a great victory for the forces of morality in American public life; to people holding this view, the main problem in the future is to make sure that the "lesson of Vietnam" is not forgotten and that American actions in the world do not slide back into their allegedly habitual immorality. Others would see Vietnam as a decisive defeat of American power and self-interest; in this view, the victory domestically was one of isolationism, and the problem is how to reverse or at least mitigate the debacle of American foreign policy. It is worth noting that these two interpretations are not necessarily contradictory. Morality is not a recipe for political success, and it would not be the first time in history that a nation developed its most exquisite moral sensibilities just before its destruction (indeed, there are theories of history that see a causal connection between the moral refinement and the destruction). My purpose here, however, is not to adjudicate between these two views, but rather to integrate them in a more comprehensive frame of reference.

It has been observed by quite a few commentators on the American situation that the Vietnam events mark the advent of a new elite. This elite has been given different names, none satisfactory. Perhaps the easiest course is to follow diplomatic usage and employ the name by which this group likes to call itself, and that is "intellectuals." It is a large group, variegated within itself, by no means fixed either sociologically or ideologically. Yet its basic characteristics are readily stated. These are people who, largely as a result of having successfully passed through the higher levels of the educational system, make their living in what Fritz Machlup has aptly designated the "knowledge industry"—the educational system proper, the communications media in their full variety (from Hollywood, via Madison Avenue, to the smoke-filled rooms in which New York publishers hold their sales conferences), the world of think-tanks and research institutions (though probably one would have to exclude those concerned with technology and the natural sciences only), and various layers of bureaucracy (both inside and outside government) where it is expected that people have "ideas." In terms of conventional categories of social stratification, the group is clearly upper-middle-class, but it is so distinctive in comparison with other groups on the same economic level (notably those in the business world) that different categories seem more useful. To call the group an elite sidesteps the question of whether or not it is, as some believe, a "new class" and points directly to the most important fact—namely, that there is here a new constellation of political power.

For the new elite certainly does exercise a good deal of political power at this point. That much is clear. It is also clear, though, that there are competing elites which also exercise political power. Most important among those, of course, is the economic elite—the world of Wall Street, of the big corporations (national and multinational), and their allies in the political system proper. Irving Kristol has argued very persuasively that there is a kind of "class struggle" going on between these two elites. I have no quarrel with this interpretation. But at the same time it is important to recognize that the antagonism between the two elites is confined almost entirely to *domestic* issues. On international issues there is a remarkable convergence of perceptions and interests, and as this convergence becomes established, a new phenomenon will increasingly become evident—the influence of what might well be called a new intellectual-industrial complex on American foreign policy. The term "intellectual-industrial complex" was once used to describe the situation in the early 1960's, when intellectuals in America related much more positively both to government and to the economic elite. My contention is that a quite different convergence is emerging now around an altogether different—and indeed opposite—objective: the dismantling of American power throughout the world.

Let me hasten to say that I am in no way suggesting a conspiracy. The idea of a convergence between the two elites is not at all dependent on the assumption (though it may be a correct one, for all I know) that top executives of multinational corporations regularly engage in earnest dialogue

PETER L. BERGER is professor of sociology at Rutgers and the author of, most recently, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*.

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with editorial writers of the New York *Times*. Current fashion to the contrary notwithstanding, history rarely moves through conspiracies. Nor is it my assumption that the convergence is based on some sort of agreement on matters of theory. Rather, perceptions and interests converge in an unintended way, possibly even in a way that contradicts the theories held by the two parties. Max Weber used the term "elective affinity" to describe such a process. Particular ideas and particular interests come together at certain moments of history, they "fit" with each other, and it is this "fit" which becomes a real factor in the course of events.

The United States came out of World War II as a major world power. For a quarter of a century this power, maintained through a network of military and political commitments, has derived its legitimacy from the idea that it serves to defend freedom (in this respect the analogy is with Athens rather than Rome). It hardly needs emphasis at this late date that the concept of freedom in this legitimation has been rather elastic. The so-called "free world" contains, or contained (it is indicative of our situation that one is uncertain as to what tense to use), a good many dictatorships as well as genuine democracies. All the same, it *was* a "free world" in two senses. Included within it were *all* the democracies; and, while it did include some dictatorships, it did *not* include any totalitarian society (is it still necessary, after the work of the late Hannah Arendt, to explain that crucial distinction?).

Until the late 1960's, the great majority of American intellectuals accepted the essential legitimacy of American power, even if they had objections to this or that manifestation of it. Equally important, the economic elite operated on the notion that the maintenance of American power in the world was in their interest (in *that* respect, at any rate, being in full accord with the Marxists). Vietnam changed all this. Most American intellectuals have since Vietnam come to believe that the exercise of American power is immoral. But what has been less noticed is that Vietnam has also changed the mind of a substantial segment of the economic elite as to the economic advantages of world power: it has given rise to the idea that the maintenance of American world power is *unprofitable.*

AT FIRST glance, the shift in perception of the intellectual elite appears to be grounded in ethical or ideological considerations, but one does not have to be a Marxist to suspect that this is not the whole story. Broadly speaking, the major alternatives for the direction of modern societies are a system favoring market mechanisms in the distribution of whatever good things are available, as against a system favoring mechanisms of political allocation. These alternatives—which are only very inadequately described by the terms "capitalism" and "socialism" and which are not embodied in ideal-typical form in any existing societies—do, however, point to tendencies, emphases, and preferences. On the American political spectrum, the "Right" favors market mechanisms, the "Left" mechanisms of political allocation (*mutatis mutandis*, the same division holds for other countries, especially for Western Europe). A good case can be made for the proposition that intellectuals tend to be on the "Left" because they expect to profit in very material terms from a system in which mechanisms of political allocation are favored over against market mechanisms. Once again, this case has been made by Kristol; more recently, it has been made very eloquently by the German sociologist Helmut Schelsky. It is probable that the intellectuals are mistaken in this expectation, at least in the long run, but that is irrelevant at present. It is certainly correct that, in the United States, intellectuals have felt that their interests were better served by "liberal" than by "conservative" political forces. The "knowledge industry," like any other, gravitates politically toward its most reliable sources of subsidization.

But it would be excessively cynical and *ipso facto* reductive to interpret ideological trends in the intellectual elite as nothing but a reflection (in Lenin's term) of its material interests. For one thing, almost all ideologies are sincerely believed in, no matter how convenient they may be to the material interests of the believers; moreover, many people, including intellectuals, are loyal to faiths and myths which transcend and may even work against their material interests. In the political world, "socialism" is the only seductive myth going today, and intellectuals are its most important protagonists. To be on the "Left" politically is to participate in this myth, and the satisfactions derived from such participation cannot be explained in terms of material interests alone. Different groups in different countries vary, of course, in their understanding of the "Left" vision. Everywhere it is a vision of a society in which the alienations of modernity are overcome, in which there is not only a high degree of equality but also a new ethic of human community. It is this common vision that allows individuals with quite divergent positions on concrete political issues to perceive each other as belonging together; in *that* sense, if in no other, the adage *pas d'ennemis à gauche* expresses a profoundly correct insight.

This "Left" ideological tendency is an international phenomenon. It is now dominant among the intellectual elites in most of Western Europe and in most of the Third World, even in countries where governments are animated by other ideas and where the influence of intellectuals over "the masses" is slight. In fact, this tendency is dominant everywhere except in the Communist countries.

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The American situation is different in a number of respects. The "Left" tendency here is more recent, therefore more precarious. There continue to be countervailing tendencies, even among intellectuals. Also, aside from a still small minority of committed Marxists, the American "Left" is comparatively open, less doctrinaire, "softer" than its counterparts in Europe and the Third World. It is more pacifist than militant, it recoils from the uglier realities of "revolutionary necessity," and in the classical trade-off between equality and liberty it continues to insist on the possibility of holding on tenaciously to *both* ideals.

Despite factional splits of various kinds, the intellectual elite dominated by this ideological tendency shares a general political program. In domestic affairs, the program has probably been caught most accurately in the title of a recent book by Herbert Gans: *More Equality!* The phrase covers not only the egalitarian thrust in economic and social policies—a thrust antagonistic to market forces and its alleged inequities—but also expresses a cultural orientation of "liberationism," which extends the demand for equality to all manner of deviances in personal "life style." The sometimes complicated details and dilemmas of this domestic program need not concern us here. What does concern us is its program in foreign affairs. This has its contradictions and ambiguities as well, but its fundamental thrust can also be captured in a phrase: *Less Power!* Or, more precisely: Less *American* power!

Few members of the American intellectual elite recommend the abolition of the military establishment; rather, it is to be cut down as much as possible—and, very importantly, not to be relied upon as a means of influence and persuasion. Needless to say, there is even stronger antagonism to covert operations of any kind. In all of this, there is hardly any sympathy for the major foreign adversary of the United States. The group under discussion here is certainly *not* pro-Soviet (though it has a pronounced tendency to underestimate Soviet power and overestimate the reasonable character of Soviet intentions). When it comes to admiring foreign regimes, the propensity is to choose regimes that call themselves "socialist" and that are (or are thought to be) different from the Soviet type of "socialism"—China, North Vietnam, Cuba have at one time or another been the major beneficiaries of this quest for new forms of socialism to admire.

But the main point of the program of this group in foreign affairs is that the United states is no longer to use its power to contain the spread of Communism, or to intervene militarily to defend other democratic countries, or to foster the spread of free institutions anywhere else in the world. These American intellectuals do, of course, believe in such classical democratic values as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, individual protections against arbitrary arrest, due process, and the like. But they are against any effort to "impose" such values on other countries—or, at any rate, on other countries calling themselves "socialist."

Until very recently such ideas were in sharp opposition to those prevailing among the economic elite in this country. If the latter was seen by the former as caught in a "cold-war mentality" or an ideology of "imperialism," the reverse perception was one of "utopianism," "idealism," and "softness on Communism." Put simply: intellectuals were losing faith in the benevolence of American world power while businessmen were still holding on to it. I believe that this has been changing since the debacle of the American intervention in Indochina. While businessmen have not exactly become latter-day converts to McGovernism, the perceived self-interest of the economic elite is leading it to a posture in the area of foreign policy which is highly congruent with the posture of the intellectuals.

Again, this is not to suggest that businessmen are exclusively motivated by material interests, any more than (conversely) intellectuals are exclusively motivated by ideological or moral considerations. Intellectuals have material interests as well as ideological commitments, and businessmen have beliefs, values, and moral and cognitive prejudices as well as material interests. Indeed, when businessmen are compared with intellectuals, it is hard to say who has the edge in the matter of ideology. However, the economic elite operates in a context where the penalties for false perceptions are more swiftly and more tangibly experienced than in the context of the intellectual elite. This means that ideological tendencies among businessmen are more rigorously controlled by a "reality principle"—to wit, the principle of perceived economic interest.

It is on the basis of this principle that the American economic elite has been changing its position on the American role in world affairs. The maintenance of American power in the world, previously perceived as an economic asset, is now coming to be seen as an economic liability. It is inflationary (Vietnam was *not* "good for Wall Street"); it is an insufficient guarantee for the safety of foreign investments; it unnecessarily antagonizes an important sector of the foreign market for American goods. This shift may not pertain to all parts of the world equally; an exception may be at least some areas of Latin America. But it pertains, I think, to most of the rest of the Third World. Most importantly, it has affected the perception of American economic interests vis-à-vis the Communist countries.

From the standpoint of any economic elite, political stability is a prime desideratum. It must be, since only in a politically stable situation can long-range economic strategies pay off. The modern corporation is compelled, most of the time, to think in long-range terms; that is, it can only rare-

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ly afford quick in-and-out economic adventures. This concern with political stability has led over and over again to a readiness to do business with all sorts of morally distasteful regimes, as long as those regimes had a control over their respective countries that seemed reasonably long-range. In fact, as intellectual critics have pointed out repeatedly, American business abroad had tended to prefer stable dictatorships to unstable democracies. There is no need to recount here the uninspiring record of American corporations meddling in the internal affairs of foreign countries to insure a profitably stable political environment.

The one big exception to this general tendency has been Communist regimes. These did, of course, provide political stability; indeed, it could be argued that in the contemporary world they provide the politically stable situations *par excellence*. But they were also viewed (and viewed correctly) as being inimical to American economic enterprise. It is precisely this perception that is now changing. Communist regimes, and particularly those within the Soviet orbit, have shown themselves increasingly to be reliable trade and investment partners; in the exact measure in which this is taken to be the case, the political stability of these regimes comes to appear an asset.

In the past few years, the Soviets and their European satellites have demonstrated that they are very much interested in economic relations with American business. Empirically, they have turned out to be hard bargainers, but once they make an agreement, they keep it. American investments in these countries have been limited. But they are invariably safe, or so it seems thus far. There is no reason to think that this would change if the investments grew. In the Communist countries, as contrasted with those of the Third World, there are no problems with anti-American intellectuals and political movements, with coups or terrorism, with aggressive labor unions. Inflation is controlled and tax regulations are simple. Once it can be assumed that Communist countries are interested in long-range economic relations with American business, all these qualities become very attractive indeed. And, even better, no exercises in American "imperialism" are necessary to maintain such favorable conditions. In sum: it has become possible to do very good business with the Communists.

Admittedly, all these perceptions are based on the slim evidence of the last few years. The new view in the ascendant among the business elite makes some assumptions that cannot be empirically validated—particularly the assumption that the economic needs of the Soviets will continue to be what they are now, and the further assumption that a new generation of Soviet leaders will continue the present precarious balancing act between economic and ideological interests. Nobody (least of all the Sovietologists) can say how likely it is that these assumptions will hold. Can the Soviet economy, and especially its agrarian sector, finally overcome its chronic inefficiencies? Can Soviet technology catch up with the West? Is an ideologically or militarily more aggressive leadership waiting in the wings? Who knows? The assumptions on which the new view is based, however, are about as reliable as any others held in connection with foreign economic undertakings—and they are almost certainly better than *any* assumptions about the future of that explosive area of erstwhile American "imperialism" known as the Third World.

BUT *it is not in the Third World, it is* in Europe that this shift in perception may have the most far-reaching consequences. It is Europe that has been the major focus of American economic and political-military interests. It has been axiomatic since World War II that Europe was essential to these interests; indeed, the very existence of what we now know as Western Europe is a product of this axiom. Now, it is not at all necessary to conclude that this axiom is about to be rejected *in toto* by the American economic elite. There will continue to be very important American economic interests in Western Europe. But increasingly there will also be important American economic interests in Eastern Europe. Sooner or later, the difference between the two Europes will become a little fuzzy in this perspective. One may pinpoint the change by saying that until now, a Sovietization of Western Europe, whether by direct Soviet actions or by means of internal Communist movements, was deemed to be fundamentally contrary to American economic interests. What I believe is happening now is that such a Sovietization of Western Europe is becoming less unthinkable to the American business elite. That is to say, it is becoming less self-evident to the economic elite that American economic interests necessitate the preservation of democracy in Western Europe and the expensive deployment of American military power to that end.*

If one wanted to be ironic, one could say that American businessmen are beginning to get rid of their Marxist presuppositions. It is Marxism, of course, that has insisted on the inevitable linkage of American capitalism and American world power. But what if Marxism has been wrong all along? What if American world power comes to be seen as an economic disadvantage by the "ruling circles" of the American economy? The rudest shock would be experienced by those Euro-

* I have deliberately used the term "Sovietization" rather than "Finlandization." Finland is a democracy, as the Finns are always quick to point out. They are less quick to point out that this fortunate condition is due to the position of the country *in between* the Soviet and American orbits of power. If American power disappeared from Europe, Soviet policy there would very likely be much less gingerly. In other words, "Finlandization" would then be a luxury that the Europeans might have to forgo.

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pean intellectuals (probably the majority) whose anti-Americanism has been coupled all along with the serene assurance that American power will continue to protect them from the Russians. It will be interesting to observe the reaction on the day when Western Europe wakes up to the fact that American "imperialism" has, indeed, gone home—leaving the Europeans, armed only with France's *force de frappe* and a lot of Swedish rhetoric, alone with the Russians at last.

How powerful is the new intellectual-industrial complex? It is difficult to tell. Certainly there are forces on the other side. There continue to be people in the economic elite who view things differently, be it for ideological reasons (one can still say "free world" in business circles in this country without immediately losing the entire audience) or because of a different notion of economic interests. There still are intellectuals, in a rather beleaguered state, who perceive a connection between American power and freedom. There is, of course, the military (though I would be at a loss to evaluate its influence on foreign policy at this point—a new C. Wright Mills is needed for this task). There is the present leadership of American labor.

All these groupings function in a context of democratic politics and public opinion which, at the present moment, are in a state of considerable flux. Thus it is very hard to assess which viewpoint "has the troops" in terms of American politics. There continues to be a large segment of the American people that is highly susceptible to the old Wilsonian appeals to liberty and democracy. The popular response to Daniel P. Moynihan's speeches at the United Nations may be cited as evidence. Undoubtedly, though, there is also a widespread weariness with foreign commitments, a fear of Vietnam-like episodes in the future, and considerable disillusionment with patriotic rhetoric about America's mission in the world. The new intellectual-industrial complex is in a position to respond to this mood in a peculiar way. If the proposition is to diminish American world power, the intellectuals make it seem morally right and the businessmen make it appear realistic. A combination of self-righteousness and hard-nosed realism is hard to beat in American politics.

To SUM UP the argument: What I have been calling in this essay a new intellectual-industrial complex is a curious symbiosis of perceptions which is beginning to have an influence on American foreign policy. It is often called isolationist, but this is a misleading epithet, since neither of its two component groups envisages the withdrawal of the United States from the world. Rather, to use Harlan Cleveland's provocative phrase, America is to be a partner in an emerging "planetary bargain." The coinage to be used in this bargain is largely moral for one group, largely economic for the other; both would deemphasize the coinage of military and political power. If one were to adopt the terminology of Vilfredo Pareto, one could say that the methods of "foxes" are to be substituted for those of "lions." Or, if one were to adopt a terminology of more recent vintage, one could speak of a "greening" of American foreign policy.

The symbiosis is fragile. In this alliance between putative morality and alleged realism, either side could fall apart. One can imagine various eventualities raising questions among the intellectuals about their moral assumptions: new threats to the survival of Israel must, alas, rank high on the list. The businessmen might come to doubt the realism of some of their own perceptions: what, for instance, if an economically irrational Bonapartism were to arise in the post-Brezhnev Soviet leadership? Needless to say, neither American intellectuals nor American businessmen have much control over the processes that might lead to such eventualities. The symbiosis, then, may not be permanent. All the same, I believe that its emergence at this very important moment in world affairs is a fact to be taken account of, a fact with potentially far-reaching consequences even if it should turn out to be transitory.

American power since World War II has been an often uneasy mixture of two purposes—the pursuit of American self-interest, as variously perceived, and the defense of the shrinking number of democratic societies. And whatever else American power may have been (all too often it was very depressing indeed, from any moral point of view), it was *also* the only significant shield of free societies in different parts of the world. What is being suggested here is that the two purposes may now come to be dissociated altogether—with ominous results for the future of freedom everywhere. Despite all the talk about multilateral centers of power, the only immediately visible beneficiary of a contraction of American power would be the Soviet Union. In that case, the main hope for the survival of free societies is that the Soviet empire would turn out to be as efficient as Soviet agriculture. It is a tenuous hope.

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Is Peace Possible in the Middle East?

Walter Laqueur

ONE OF THE mysteries of world politics is the amount of attention being paid these days to the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to some estimates, almost half the time of the last session of the UN General Assembly was devoted to issues connected in one way or another with this conflict. A quantitative study of the uses of Henry Kissinger's energies would probably show a similar pattern, and so would an analysis of editorial comment on international affairs. Indeed, any unsuspecting newspaper reader would get the impression that the future of the Golan Heights and the West Bank are more important than all the other problems in the world put together. Yet it would be only too easy to point to at least half-a-dozen danger zones of equal or greater weight in other parts of the world, not to mention sub-acute critical trends in the political and economic sphere whose long-term effects may have the gravest results.

Of course those who put so much emphasis on the Middle East argue that it is not the future of Golan that is at stake but the general stability of the area and the securing of the oil supply. They will admit that but for these overriding considerations, the Arab-Israeli conflict would be of no greater interest than the conflict between Bolivia and Peru, or at most between North and South Korea. But unless there is some "movement" toward a "lasting peace" in the Middle East, they say, there will be another war; and a new war would trigger an oil embargo, start a worldwide depression, put at least ten million Americans out of work, destroy NATO, allow Soviet power to engulf the Straits of Gibraltar, and bring Communist ministers into coalition governments in much of Europe. If, on the other hand, Israel withdrew from the occupied territories, permanent peace would follow—Middle Eastern governments would be stable, the oil would flow, its price would go down, bankers and exporters would make profits, generals and admirals would obtain bases, and American policy-makers would be able to devote themselves to building a new and more workable world order.

Now, the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would in every way be desirable. But examining recent suggestions for the settlement of this conflict, or of the hopes held out for the consequences that would follow from such a settlement, one has to cut one's way through a thicket of wishful thinking almost unique in an otherwise fairly cynical age.

To begin with, there is no cogent reason to believe that a settlement would add to the stability of the Middle East (let alone the stability of the entire world). The recent history of the Middle East is a story of conflicts: Algerian interests clash with those of Morocco and Tunisia; Libya is at loggerheads with Egypt and Sudan; there has been almost constant tension between Iraq and all her neighbors; South Yemen has a conflict of long standing with North Yemen, and is even now conducting surrogate war against Oman; Lebanon is in a state of civil war; and the survival of Jordan to this day is a miracle. The list could be extended without much difficulty. Moreover, the traditional rivalries among governments have been aggravated by the sudden influx of oil revenues.

Despite the Arab-Israeli confrontation, some of these conflicts have entered an acute phase, but thanks to the need to make common cause against the "Zionist danger," there has by and large been a truce in the Arab world. For so long as the campaign against Israel continues, Arab solidarity is the supreme necessity, and any attempt to raise other issues or press other demands is attacked as an act of treason. Once this unifying factor is removed, once the "Zionist danger" decreases, the struggles between rich countries and poor, between haves and have-nots, between pro-Soviet and pro-American regimes are bound to escalate; and so are the grave domestic tensions between "moderates" and "radicals" within each country. The Arab world would then be rent by bitter civil strife and, very probably, war; and it is the oil countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait which would be in the gravest danger. For while it is sometimes argued that in the absence of progress toward peace in the Middle East, moderate policies and leaders will be superseded by more radical ones, this is far more likely to happen as the *consequence* of progress toward peace between Israel and the Arab countries and the resulting increase of tension elsewhere in the Arab world.

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ALMOST everyone believes that Israel's return to the 1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state are necessary to a settlement in the Middle East. Of course the basic issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict is not the border problem or a Palestinian state—the conflict existed before there were occupied territories and before there was a demand for a Palestinian state. The real issue, as Elie Kedourie puts it, is the right of the Jews, "hitherto a subject community under Islam, to exercise political sovereignty in an area regarded as part of the Muslim domain." Why, Professor Kedourie asks, should the Arabs, who have been unwilling for twenty-eight years to grant this right to the Jews, suddenly be willing to do so just when Arab power and influence have so greatly increased?

But let us assume that the Arabs *are* willing to do so. Let us even assume that the PLO no longer regards the destruction of the State of Israel as its ultimate aim, that it is ready to accept the Jewish state, and peacefully to coexist with it in a Palestinian state of its own. What would be the nature of such a Palestinian state?

A look at the map shows that it would consist of two separate parts. One part would be the West Bank, bounded on the east by the River Jordan and including Samaria and Judaea; the western border would run west of Tulkarm and Kalkilya, east of Lod and Ramla, from there to Jerusalem, then south to Hebron and the Dead Sea—altogether some 2,165 square miles. In addition there would be the Gaza Strip. The West Bank has a population of about 600,000, the Gaza Strip of some 300,000. The two sections are not connected, and they remind one of what the late Viscount Samuel said about an earlier partition plan: it would have the effect of creating a Saar and a Polish Corridor and half-a-dozen Danzigs and Memels in a country the size of Wales. If it is argued that Israel in its 1967 borders cannot be defended, a Palestinian state would be even less defensible.

Nor would such a state be economically viable. Annual rainfall in the northern part of the West Bank is fairly high, which has favored local agriculture, but industry is all but nonexistent except for some olive-oil and soap factories in Nablus. Hebron produces glass as well as wooden and mother-of-pearl souvenirs. Bethlehem and Ramalla cater to tourists. The Gaza Strip, whose population density is one of the world's highest, has no industry either; there are citrus groves and some summer fruits such as watermelons. Given this economic situation (which has already forced many workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to work in Israeli industry and on building sites), the new state would not even be able to absorb more than a token number of Palestinian refugees.

Some Arab spokesmen have recently argued that the issue of non-viability is not really a very important one, since a great many countries in the modern world are not viable either. But this, though true, is hardly a reassuring argument. Arab spokesmen also claim that the Palestinians are a hard-working people (which is correct), that they have a great deal of know-how, and that they would get support from the oil-rich countries. According to various research papers prepared by the PLO studies center in Beirut, a Palestinian state could be economically viable—provided the Saudis gave billions for an unlimited period. Past experience has shown, however, that Arab solidarity does not extend to sharing oil revenues, except perhaps for the purchase of arms. Egypt in particular, which has received no major investments from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, has learned this lesson the hard way.

IN ADDITION to being unviable, a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza would have all the makings of a permanent irredentism. If any single thought has gone into the proposals for establishing such a state (and this, unfortunately, cannot be taken for granted), it is apparently the idea that a partial fulfillment of Palestinian demands would lead to a deradicalization of the PLO. Thus it is said that once the Palestinians had to assume responsibility for a state, however small, they would have to drop their maximalist program for the conquest of Israel; nor could they afford to engage in terror any more. Yet even if one believes that there is a moderate element inside the PLO genuinely willing to coexist with Israel on the basis of the 1967 frontiers—a daring leap of faith indeed—it seems almost a foregone conclusion that the logic of events would drive those moderates toward extremism.

Once the state were founded, there would almost certainly be a struggle between the different PLO wings and, of course, the "Rejection Front" (primarily Iraq) and various Communist organizations. These groups, which stand for divergent political aims, deeply distrust one another, but the stakes are not at present sufficiently high to warrant open warfare. With control of a state in the balance, however, a bitter internal battle would begin. Units of Fatah and the PLPF stationed in the new state would regard it as a mere interim arrangement, a milestone on the road to the liberation of the entire homeland. Other Arab countries, weary of carrying the burden of Palestine, might well advise the Palestinians not to pass immediately on to the next phase of the struggle but to let a decent interval elapse. However, in the fight against Israel this would be dangerous for the Palestinians, for once the momentum were lost, it would not easily be regained. It is doubtful therefore whether they would be ready to listen to outside advice. And as to internal advice, though the merchants of Nablus and Jenin would certainly be interested in a climate conducive to business as usual, they could no more be expected to prevail against the irredentists than the bankers of Beirut have been able to do against the terrorists.

In some ways, indeed, it would be easier than in

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the past for the Palestinians to conduct their operations against Israel. With artillery and missile bases, physical infiltration would be largely unnecessary, while Israeli counter-shelling would be less effective since there would be fewer targets on the other side. Israeli retaliatory raids, on the other hand, would be severely condemned by world public opinion and sanctions might be taken against them.

Nevertheless, there is a limit to what the PLO could reasonably hope to achieve. The Israelis are not a minority like the Assyrians or the Kurds, nor is there any similarity between their position and that of the Maronites. Israel has a considerable military potential, and it would be unwilling to play according to rules established by the PLO. Fighting would not be limited to border skirmishes; there would be a general escalation involving other Arab armies and possibly also the Soviet Union, and the use of nonconventional weapons would not be ruled out.

In short, the moment one begins to scrutinize the practical implications of establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it becomes abundantly clear that such a state, far from contributing to a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, would more likely exacerbate it.

MANY among those in the West who favor the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state genuinely believe that it is the only way to peace, stability, and justice in the Middle East. Others are aware of the dangers ahead but see no alternative in view of the seemingly overwhelming pressures from all quarters; they have persuaded themselves that the worst does not always happen. Then there are those who have no illusions about the outcome of this policy, who know that it will lead to a new war, or wars, but who regard this as both inevitable and desirable, on the theory that a Middle East settlement (as they see it) will be possible only after further bloodshed. Finally, there are those who, unwilling to accept these as the only alternatives, have cast about for variants on the idea of a Palestinian state.

One such variant, a way of coping with the problem of viability, is federation with either Israel or Jordan. At the present time, one cannot envisage a scheme, however ingenious, of federating Israel and a Palestinian state that has a realistic chance of working. The "Jordanian solution," which involves returning the West Bank to Jordan and which Israel now favors, might have worked in 1968, but it is unlikely at this point to break the deadlock. The Palestinians are against accepting Jordanian control in the short run, and King Hussein knows that in the long run a merger between the West Bank and the Hashemite kingdom (the majority of whose inhabitants even now are Palestinians) would make Jordan a Palestinian state.

Hussein's loss, however, would not necessarily be the Palestinians' gain. Even adding Jordan to a Palestinian state on the West Bank still would not provide sufficient scope for a large-scale resettlement of Palestinian refugees. For Jordan is a poor country. Its per-capita income is $270, lower than any other Arab country except the Sudan and Yemen; between 1965 and 1972 (the last figures available) it experienced minus economic growth. Whichever way one looks at it, a merger between the West Bank and Jordan would be no great bargain. Hussein and the Jordanians would lose, the Palestinians would not gain much, and Israel would still be threatened, only this time by one state rather than two.

Besides federation, there is of course the idea of a bi-national state. The establishment of such a state ("democratic and secular"), which was rejected for decades by the leadership of the Palestinian Arabs, is now the official aim of the PLO. The PLO formula should not be taken quite literally, for it clashes with two other Palestinian demands, namely that the character of the state must be Arab, and that the state should be integrated into the area and not remain an "outpost of the West." But a democratic and secular state could not possibly integrate itself into an area that is neither democratic nor secular. Such a state would invite envy and hostility and would be regarded as a foreign body.

With these reservations, it may be quite true that the PLO wants a bi-national state of sorts, but does not know how to achieve this aim in the present circumstances. One of its chief spokesmen in the West recently stated in an interview that if he waved a magic wand and said, "Let all the Palestinian Arabs and all the Israeli Jews live tomorrow in a democratic, secular Palestine," this would more or less immediately lead to a civil war: "All these years of conflict and tension are not a good background for the establishment of a peaceful and harmonious coexistence between two communities."* Said Hammami is of course quite right; historical experience, including some of very recent vintage, shows that bi-nationalism works only very rarely.

IT WILL be argued that these speculations and objections are all too pessimistic, that the conflict will not necessarily escalate, that the Palestinians may well put up with the existence of Israel (and the Israelis with the existence of a Palestinian state), that there may be isolated acts of violence but no movement toward full-scale war. Yet even if an optimistic scenario for achieving a settlement is assumed, there would still remain the problem of guarantees by outside powers.

Who would these powers be? Among the various nominees who have been put forward, the United Nations and Europe can be dismissed without fur-

*Said Hammami, quoted in *New Outlook*, October-November 1975.

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ther comment. As for the Soviet Union, it is indeed true (as a recent Brookings Institution study group has noted) that the Russians, because of their relations with Syria and the PLO, have a considerable capacity for obstructing peace or even blocking further progress toward an overall settlement. Or to put the case even more bluntly: the Soviet Union could probably torpedo any settlement not to its liking. But is it at all certain that the Soviet Union would prefer a peace settlement to the present state of affairs? Those who argue that a new Middle Eastern war would be a disaster for the West and would greatly strengthen Soviet influence, paradoxically also maintain that it is in the interest of the Soviet Union to help make peace in the Middle East and to guarantee it. The logic underlying this argument is not readily obvious; governments seldom act for any length of time contrary to their own interests, and the Soviet government in particular is not known for excessive altruism in world politics.

This is not an abstract issue: if the Soviet Union had wanted to make a contribution to Middle Eastern peace, it could have put some pressure on the "Rejection Front" to moderate its opposition to any political solution of the conflict. This would certainly have made it easier for Arafat to produce an ambiguous formula satisfying the State Department (though not Israel) that the PLO might be willing under certain circumstances to consider according Israel something that could be interpreted by unsuspecting third parties as *de facto* recognition. But the Soviet Union has refrained so far even from making this minor effort. It is unlikely therefore that the Soviets will extend a bona-fide guarantee to a settlement which gives their Arab friends and clients less than they want. (This is not to say that the Soviet Union might not look with favor upon the establishment of a non-viable Palestinian state, asuming with some justification that it would sooner or later gain a foothold in this state.)

American guarantees are almost equally problematical. A guarantee that does not make provisions for military intervention is worse than useless, and given the isolationist mood of Congress, this is about all that can be expected. But even if a real guarantee should be provided, it would obviously apply only in the case of an extreme violation of the agreement, such as an all-out military attack. This, however, is a less likely eventuality than the kind of shelling across the border which has been practiced in recent years from Jordan and Lebanon. Israel would find such shelling intolerable, but would the United States? And even if there were a clear case of aggression, would there not be cries of "No more Vietnams" and the like? And even if all these fears were to prove groundless, it is still true that if present trends continue, America may no longer be in a position actively to intervene even if it wanted to, simply because it is steadily falling behind the Soviet Union in military preparedness.

II

To accept the inherently unstable nature of Middle East politics and the intractability of its problems is not to preach defeatism and opt for inaction. It is, however, to ask for an end to false hopes in the West generally and in the United States in particular. For it is important to understand that even if there should be a settlement between Israel and the Arabs, major conflicts in the Middle East would persist. And so far as basic Western interests are concerned, these might be in even greater danger after a settlement were reached than in the present situation.

Yet whatever the consequences for other countries, it is certainly in Israel's interest to work for a lessening of tensions in its relations with its Arab neighbors. There are things Israel can do, but these options cannot be discussed without reference to the immobilism of Israeli policy after 1967 in which they have their roots.

Psychologically, this immobilism is easy to understand. The 1967 victory had been complete, and it seemed only reasonable to assume that the Arabs would be willing to discuss peace terms. The old borders had been a nightmare, and since Arab leaders had threatened Israel with extinction so many times, it seemed right to insist that a return to these borders was out of the question. But the Arabs refused to meet Israel halfway, let alone to discuss a firm and lasting peace. In the circumstances, the military victors saw no reason to seize the political initiative. No Israeli leader was ready to take risks with the security of the country. It was the "safe-border" argument, not the mystique of the "Land of Israel" movement, which underlay Israeli policy between 1967 and 1973.

In retrospect, however, it is clear that this approach ignored the wider context of world politics. It underrated latent Arab power (economic and political rather than military); and giving absolute priority to security, it made the defusing of an inherently dangerous situation impossible. Again, it is easy to point to mitigating circumstances. Few countries in history have made unilateral concessions after a brilliant military victory. Psychologically, it would have been difficult to persuade the Israeli public to pursue such a course of action, especially since there was no guarantee that unilateral Israeli concessions would be reciprocated, and that the Arabs would not go to war again after a few years.

Mitigating circumstances, however, count for little in politics, and we now can see that greater risks should have been taken. Time was not working in Israel's favor, and it would have been preferable to part with at least some of the occupied territories, unilaterally if necessary, from a position of strength rather than weakness. To be sure, territorial concessions might not have prevented a new war; in that case Israel's position would have been worse. But it need not have been much

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worse, especially if arrangements had been made for the demilitarization of border zones. It is true that the Arab countries might still not have accepted the existence of the Jewish state. Certainly there would have been bellicose speeches and threats on the part of the Arab governments. Acts of terror would have continued and Israeli goods might not have passed through the Suez Canal. But not all the Arab governments would have felt the same overriding urgency to go to war and recover the lost territories. And since the Israeli problem was not the only one preoccupying the Arab world, the conflict might well have lost some of its acuteness. Israel would still have figured high among Arab grievances, but it might no longer have had top priority.

Israel, in other words, could not possibly have relied on Arab good will, but it could have relied on Arab disunity. It was this failure to accept anything less than peace, the insistence on a policy involving no risks, which paralyzed Israeli foreign policy between 1967 and 1973.

Some now agree that mistakes were made, but maintain that a democratically elected government could not have carried out a policy rejected by the majority of the population. Such fatalism is unfounded; public opinion would have accepted almost any policy advocated by a strong leadership, just as it accepted Ben-Gurion's decision to withdraw Israeli forces from Sinai in 1956.

Others believe that nothing Israel might have done would have made the slightest difference. They are certain that no opportunities were missed during the interwar years—which is true in the sense that the phone call General Dayan expected from King Hussein never came, and that the Arab leaders decided at Khartoum not to negotiate with Israel. But the decisive question is, of course, whether it was indeed impossible to create opportunities, thus reducing the likelihood of a new war, and whether it would not have been worthwhile to pay a price to attain this end. There are no certainties, but it seems very plausible that Israel's international position would have been considerably stronger today had it after 1967 pursued the policy it is now being forced to carry out, if it had made voluntarily and from a position of strength the concessions it has made (and is going to make) under pressure. At the very least, Israel's position would not have been worse.

Of course not even clarity about the past can produce a magic formula that will show the way out of the present impasse. This applies especially to the view that Israel should at all costs stand firm against outside pressure in the present circumstances and should not give up an inch, on the ground that the compromises suggested will lead not toward peace but to a new war under less favorable conditions.

There are serious problems with this approach, but to reject it out of hand for ethical reasons, as certain commentators do, is to apply moral standards to Israel that are not applied to any other country. After all, it was not the fault of the Israelis that the Arabs went to war against the Jewish state in 1948 and that, as a result, new realities came into being which can no longer be undone. The Arab argument that the injustice done to the Palestinians is somehow unique is based either on ignorance or on hypocrisy. All over the world many millions of people have had to leave their native countries in recent decades without hope of repatriation. Nor have the many millions of square miles of territory conquered in war over the same period been subject to demands that they be returned. As to the case for a greater Jewish state, it was put most succinctly by Jabotinsky in his evidence before a British Royal Commission on the eve of World War II:

> . . . I do not deny [that] the Arabs of Palestine will necessarily become a minority in the country of Palestine. What I do deny is that this is a hardship. That is not a hardship on any race, any nation possessing so many national states and so many more national states in the future. One fraction, one branch of that race, and not a big one, will have to live in someone else's state; well, that is the case with all the mightiest nations of the world. I could hardly mention one of the big nations, having their states, mighty and powerful, who had not one branch living in someone else's state. That is only normal and there is no "hardship" attached to that. So when we hear the Arab claim confronted with the Jewish claim—I fully understand that any minority would prefer to be a majority: It is quite understandable that the Arabs of Palestine would also prefer Palestine to be the Arab state No. 4, 5, or 6—that I quite understand—but when the Arab claim is confronted with our Jewish demand to be saved, it is like the claims of appetite versus the claims of starvation. . . .

Today a Palestinian state would not be the fourth, but the twenty-fourth Arab state. The Palestinians may reason that they are as much entitled to their own state as all other Arabs, but all Arab leaders and political movements have solemnly declared on many occasions that the Arabs are one nation, divided by artificial frontiers; if so, the Palestinians are at home in every Arab country. Nor is there any lack of space in the Arab world. When it was decided to partition Palestine in 1947, less than one-sixth of one per cent of the territory inhabited by the Arabs was set aside for Israel; one-half of one per cent of the Arabs was to become a minority and to live in the Jewish state. This compromise was accepted by the Jews and rejected by the Arabs.

Shorn of certain dubious historical-religious arguments, then, the case for Israel to stand firm and refuse to give an inch is not a weak case at all. The difficulties arise on the level of reality and power, not on that of morality and reason. For the truth is that there is not one law for strong and weak alike. When the Soviet Union and its East European satellites expelled many millions of Ger-

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mans after World War II, world public opinion expected the Germans tacitly to accept their fate. When they protested, they were denounced as fascists and warmongers. But Israel is not a power like Russia, and the Palestinians have stronger protectors than the Germans from Poland and the Sudeten region. The fate of the Palestinians is regarded by world public opinion as a grave injustice, to be remedied as quickly as possible. If the Palestinians were politically weaker, and Israel were stronger, less dependent financially and militarily on outside help and good will, it could sit out the storm for a few years or even a few decades. Such a policy would find few supporters outside Israel, though; the idea frequently voiced by Herut and its supporters that all Israel needs is *hasbara*—more effective political propaganda—is quite illusory. What really matters in the last resort is whether Israel could get along without outside financial support, whether it could accept the risks of political isolation, whether it could produce at home all the arms that are and will be needed for its defense.

But even if it could do all these things, the size of the Arab minority in the Jewish state would still be a major problem. It is unlikely that the Arabs living in a "greater Israel" would be assimilated; there would always be a strong pull toward the other Arab countries. The improvement of Arab living standards in Israel would do nothing to assuage Arab nationalism or contribute to the solution of what is essentially a political problem. Thus a "greater Israel" would, to put the point bluntly, either cease to be Jewish or cease to be democratic.

Except for the idea of standing firm, there is no coherent strategy being advocated within Israel, and for a long time now there has been no overall concept behind the government's foreign policy. This is a general weakness of democratic societies, what with conflicting domestic pressures and the absence of strong leadership preventing major foreign political initiatives. There have been no such initiatives in Israeli foreign policy for a long time, merely responses to the actions of others. But historical experience has shown that a free society is not doomed to impotence; a democratically elected leader, or group of leaders, need not be unsure and indecisive, they need not be dependent in their every action on public-opinion polls and popularity contests, they can act without paying undue attention to their own political careers.

What, then, might Israel do? It would be a realistic policy on Israel's part to reaffirm unequivocally in conformity with Resolution 242 that there is no intention of incorporating Arab territories into the state. Israel could also declare that these territories will be evacuated step-by-step over a period of five to ten years within the framework of a general peace settlement involving recognition of Israel and a regulated rectification of the 1967 borders in the interest of security. Each Israeli concession would depend on Palestinian and Arab willingness to carry out the terms of the settlement. If, for instance, acts of terror were to continue, Israel would no longer be bound to fulfill its part of the bargain. (Such arrangements have been made before in history; they were used, for instance, in Central Europe after World War I.) Israel would also have to insist on transferring these territories to a representative Arab body—it would be pointless to deal with leaders whose authority is not recognized by the Palestinians. This would mean free elections, under the supervision of Israel, the Arab states, and some third parties. The PLO would of course compete in these elections, but it is obvious that there could be no dealings between Israel and the PLO unless and until the PLO were ready to accept the existence of Israel.

A procedure of this kind would not by itself solve any of the difficulties that have been mentioned. But it would to a certain extent reduce the risks, and it would make it possible in the interim period to work for a more lasting solution, either in the form of a confederation or some other framework that would safeguard the security and the political and economic viability of both states.

It is a long time since Israeli leaders have made concrete proposals to the Arabs for coexistence. This is not surprising, for such proposals would probably have fallen on deaf ears. The Arab-Israeli conflict may well have been inevitable; it is not inevitable, however, that it go on forever. It has to be recognized at long last that the Zionist attempt to "solve the Jewish question" resulted in the emergence of a Palestinian Arab question, and that Israel has to play its part in helping to solve *that* question. This does not imply that Israel has to sacrifice its own existence. Many Palestinians know quite well, and the others will learn, that speeches about the "total liquidation of Israel" will get them nowhere, for present-day armies, unlike the Crusaders, fight not with swords but with weapons of mass destruction. The PLO and the Rejection Front may want to destroy Israel, but they do not want to pay for it with the annihilation of their own people and their own future. Once they realize that the only alternative to coexistence is mutual extinction, a solution of the conflict will become possible. One hopes, though there can be no confidence, that this realization will come without recourse to yet another war.

But if one asks whether a lasting peace is possible in the Middle East at the present time, the answer must be no—whichever way one looks at it, and least of all as a result of the measures suggested so frequently these days with so little thought of the consequences. All one can hope for is the absence of war. If that can be achieved, the time gained can be used for thinking about new ways and means to find a stabler basis for coexistence between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

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Homeless in the World

William Barrett

ALIENATION is one of the deepest themes in modern culture. It has also become, alas, one of the most hackneyed. Everybody talks about it, and the more we talk the more casual and accepted the thing itself seems to become. Alienation even becomes an "in" thing. To be alienated is a mark of distinction that sets us off from our less sensitive fellows. In the 1960's the young aspired to it, cultivated it as a way of life, and proclaimed it as their defiance in the face of their elders. Alienation thus becomes a pseudo-home in which we may comfortably nestle along with other superior and lofty souls. The more easily we chatter about it, the more the phenomenon itself, in its true dimensions, becomes hidden to us.

Alienus means a stranger, and therefore someone not at home where he is. If we think about a home, and what it means to be without one, we shall begin to think a little more concretely about the matter of alienation. We may find too that we have not laid the disturbing ghost by our casual chatter.

To be homeless—how well we know it in this age of displaced persons! Great masses of people are uprooted, driven out of their homes, resettled in strange places. That is part of the history of our troubled century. Even in a so-called stable society like our own, mobility becomes constant. In the movements of people from city to suburb, suburb to suburb, city to city, our successive houses begin to resemble wayside stations. A few years ago the movie, *Airport*, made a popular splash. It was a poor movie, but it struck a responsive chord in the audience. An airport, with its ceaseless arrivals and departures, seemed to be an adequate image of what life today, in the global stage of humanity, has become.

After the first space flights another metaphor for our earthly existence became current. We were here on earth like voyagers on a spacecraft. The image was a well-intentioned warning: as the resources on board a spaceship are limited and therefore to be prudently conserved, so too are those of the planet earth as we voyage with it through empty space. If we befoul the atmosphere of our cabin we cannot replace it. In the technological era it is natural we should find a technological image for our terrestrial existence. Nevertheless, one could hardly find a more dismal picture of our homelessness than this. From the moment we think of our life on this planet as a voyage in a spacecraft through empty space we have ceased to dwell upon this earth as men once did.

Homelessness is the destiny of modern man. This theme is persistent and recurring in the thought of Martin Heidegger, though he appears to have an ambiguous relation to it. In his earlier works he seemed to bend every effort toward showing us how man is and must be, not by social or historical accident but essentially, an uncanny stranger in the world. His later work seeks to redress this balance: to point forward to the ways in which humankind may find again on this earth a home in which to dwell, think, and build. But perhaps there is no ambiguity here. Only when we have come to understand the stranger within us at his true depth can we learn to domesticate him again.

It might seem ironical that Heidegger, the most stubbornly regional character in modern culture, should be the contemporary philosopher most preoccupied with this theme. All his long life he has been rooted to his place, Suebia in the southwest corner of Germany, near to the Alps and the Bodensee—a mountain and a lake, good companions to meditation. Only very late in life did he travel far enough from his home to see a Greek temple, something on which his thinking had long dwelt. He wanted to see the place that had once been the home of a god, and around which men could therefore build their own homes. There is then no irony about his chosen theme. Only a figure so rooted can be properly disturbed at mankind's loss of home.

This feeling for his own region may have been what led Heidegger to become a Nazi for a few years at the beginning of that regime—a nationalist party can sometimes make a strong appeal to regional feelings. We do not know. He has taped an interview on this Nazi chapter of his life for

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the magazine, *Der Spiegel*, which will not be released until after his death. We may be just as much in the dark after we have heard it. The actors in a drama may not always be the best witnesses to the motives that drove them. What led him to break with Nazism may be more significant than what originally led him into it, for this break coincides in its dates with a definite shift in the emphasis of his thinking. Yet even here the connections between life and thought can only be tenuous and strained at best.

Perhaps philosophers should not have any biography other than the life of their thought. It does not help our initial acquaintance with Plato, for example, to learn that he chose to be prudently absent from Athens during the trial of his master Socrates. In Heidegger's case, the Nazi episode seems to be the only thing in the way of biography that some critics are willing to allow him. We are therefore spared any such further details of a biographical kind and can plunge directly into the matter of his thought.

The use of this thought is to help us come to some deeper understanding of our human homelessness. The classical analyses of alienation were given in the 19th century by Hegel and Marx. Heidegger speaks from a further region than these great thinkers. For even if their conditions for overcoming alienation were present—if the human spirit were no longer divided and at odds with itself (Hegel), and men were to find at last a real sense of community within a socialist society (Marx)—there would still lurk a more deeply rooted alienation at the core of our human being, and in relation to being itself.

I. Morning

Being? You could scarcely find a word less likely to stir the enthusiasm of readers today. We want solutions to specific problems, or—if we are to dabble in generalities—ideologies that hold forth illusions of such solutions. Being is too remote and abstract for such concerns. It has no cash value, as William James would say. Perhaps the word is hopeless, after all. History has loaded it with too many distorting connotations, and modern philosophers have riddled it with too much critical buckshot. Well then, let us scrap the word, and plunge instead into the everyday world and try to take note of the ways in which we *are* in that world.

You enter that world differently with Heidegger than with another typical modern philosopher like Wittgenstein. The latter permits you only the langauge of the everyday. You cannot rise above ordinary language to describe its nature. You can show what this language is only by examples of its use, but you remain within it. Like a fish in water, we never get out of that pervasive medium in which we live. Heidegger, however, does attempt to describe the general features of our ordinary existence, and he therefore moves both within it and without it. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the ordinary is that it harbors within it those moments that can always evict us out of it into the extraordinary and uncanny. Thus for the purposes of his description Heidegger uses a language that is often very far from ordinary language. Much has been made of the strangeness of his terminology, but that objection has long since spent its force as we have come to assimilate his meaning. A work like *Being and Time*, as we return again and again to it, begins to strike us more and more with the economy and power of its expression: it does not seem that language—in this case the German language—could have been used more simply and efficiently to convey the powerful range of what the writer has to say. As we move away from it in time, the book towers as one of the great landmarks that our century has to show for itself. In any case, it offers the profoundest description of our ordinary existence that philosophy has yet given.

Let us follow its lead, then, through one day of our everyday.

I—or you, reader—wake to the day. That in itself is as momentous a fact as it is banal. You wake to this day that is present and yet is the day that *is to be* as you set about the day's business. Time present is a future present in that presence. You do not wake in space but in your room. Physical space—the space that science constructs—is not the world in which you open your eyes at morning or close them at night. Nor do you encounter physical objects in anything like the sense of science. True, you are immediately plunged into a world of things: shoes, socks, articles of clothing or of the toilette with which you assemble yourself for the day that is both present and is-to-be. The more smoothly your dressing proceeds, the more unobtrusively these familiar articles come to hand and disappear back into their framework of use, and the less they present themselves as material substances. Only if the shoe is tight, or the razor jams, does this utensil present itself in its obtrusive obstinacy as sheer materiality that resists you. Space, matter, substance—these lie at the remote horizon of our daily concerns, if at all, and though they could become themes of purely *theoretical* interest, these are not the usual cares we take up at breakfast.

Your small world now links into a larger one: you have to be on your way to work. Notice that "have to be" again. It is a phrase so banal that we do not usually observe how heavy and fateful its meaning is. We are alive and have always to be on the way to. . . . You take your car, let us say, to the train. You stop at a traffic light. Red—that means *Stop*. This meaning is not something to be located "in your mind." Meaning is not, first and foremost, a mental phenomenon but an aspect of things within our daily world. Things have such and such a meaning as they point or refer to other

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things or to behavior that they elicit from us. And this is true too of that larger world that surrounds the man-made world of human traffic. This morning, for example, you may have peeped out of the window earlier to see if there were clouds that might *mean* rain—in which case you would have carried your raincoat. Signs, symbols, meanings—these do not enter as phenomena from a distinct realm of the mental but as aspects of the various things we encounter and have to deal with in our environment.

On the train you take a seat on the right because the morning sun, risen in the east, will not bother you there. So far there is no abstract physical space but there are spatial directions that we humans mark out for ourselves. We establish places for ourselves in relation to our particular uses for them: the right side of the train, for example, allows you to read your newspaper without the glare of sunlight.

Your morning newspaper! Here another and vaster space opens before you. Events from all over the world, reported here, file before you, depressing, cheering, or boring, according as they engage your particular concerns. Man is the creature who can annihilate distance and bring far and near together. This peculiar relation to space is one of his possibilities. Notice how this thread of possibility weaves its way in and out of the tapestry of your day. This day itself is a concrete possibility present—the day that is here and yet is to be, and in such a way that what is to be already shapes what you think and do. Perhaps too the morning headlines carry the tremors of history behind them. To be involved in history, making it or suffering it, that too is one of mankind's unique possibilities, at once challenging and terrifying. Even in our tiny corner, reader, you and I, who are not principals in the historical drama, nevertheless feel the constant tug of its possibilities upon our lives. But perhaps at the moment such thoughts beget anxiety, and you would rather turn aside from the ominous possibilities your paper spreads before you and relax with the crossword puzzle.

Notice that you have not been an ego or a self or a mind throughout any of this. Not in the sense, at any rate, in which philosophers have traditionally discussed these matters. You do not carry around a self inside you like a tiny substantial nugget at your center. Sitting there in the train, you are simply one passenger among many. You rest for the moment in that anonymity of the everyday that is at moments blessedly possible for us. An existentialist of a different brand like Sartre would poison even this tranquility for us. According to him, the conductor who glances at us as he comes down the aisle has transfixed us with his stare and we are frozen in the gaze of the Other. Sartre is haunted by the world of Proust, where as you exit from a brothel or crouch to peer through a keyhole you may suddenly be caught by a hostile eye that fixes you forever in the posture of shame. As a phenomenologist, Sartre can never quite grasp the normal in the everyday; his imagination, theatrical and melodramatic, must distort, heighten, overdramatize. Significantly, his best play is also his most theatrical one—*Kean*, an adaptation of Dumas and a brilliant recreation of Second Empire melodrama. But we are not now in the world of Proust or of Dumas but in an ordinary train; and this anonymity of the everyday, of being one among others, is emotionally and ethically neutral. Persist in it too long, of course, or against the call of other possibilities, and you become a lost soul, a faceless member of the mass.

But for the moment the respite is precious and you escape into your crossword. The puzzle is just difficult enough to engage you and just easy enough not to cause frustration. If the latter, you might be thrown into cares that would project this self lurking in the background all too violently into the foreground. It will be with you in any case all too plentifully throughout your day, always at the horizon, summoning you to be, never complete but always on the way. You are thankful then for these few moments of respite.

So we could go on, if space permitted, through the intricate details of a day, with Heidegger always at our side. It is a good exercise for readers of him to live a day in the eyes of his text. It is amazing how his book stands up to the test. Here is our human existence, not as philosophers have conceived it or as we habitually cover it over with readymade phrases, but as we actually live it, thrusting forth into the dimensions of time, with past-present-future interweaving and co-present, and yet with the silent power of the future—what is not yet but is to be—as the persistent tug upon us pulling the spinning threads along.

Life is many days, day after day. But it is not, we hope, a mere succession of days. We long that these days shall somehow add up to a meaning or a drama that we can call a life. Unlike Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, which has no beginning, middle, or end, Heidegger's treatment of the everyday has an intensely dramatic, even melodramatic, structure. It has almost the elements of a plot or story about it. And this story, oddly enough in a work so austerely secular in tone, follows the outlines of the traditional religious tale of salvation. Heidegger tells us how our human being, thrown into the world, may lose itself there, and sink to a fallen state; but how through the encounter with conscience, anxiety, and death, it is called to and can become an authentic self. But if Heidegger follows the outlines of a religious parable of salvation, what he finally offers is at the farthest remove from the usual consolations of religion. The encounter with anxiety and death opens up no heavenly perspectives for the self. It discovers in that encounter only its own nothingness. Yet the

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discovery is liberating. In the light of this disclosure we can attain a resolve that frees us from the petty servitudes of the everyday. The fundamental human freedom is our freedom toward death. In the light of that freedom we can take upon ourselves, as authentic humans, whatever decisions and tasks fall to us in the ordinary course of life.

Anxiety and death are shocking matters to be thrown before philosophers who are engrossed in more formal and technical questions. A man must be something of a sensationalist, they think, to deal with such themes at all. The result is that these matters have bulked so large for commentators, both friendly and hostile, that they have obscured the more persistent theme that Heidegger was after from the start. Anxiety and death, to be sure, are integral parts of life, and the philosopher who wishes to understand our existence must come to terms with them. Death is a fearful thing against which the teachers of mankind in the past, including the ancient philosophers, have sought to bring consolations of one kind or another. But Heidegger does not enter the lists in order to bring some kind of modernized version of ancient stoicism that would teach us to face death with equanimity. His purpose is neither therapeutic nor moral; and if his effect is at all moral, it is so only incidentally, insofar as he enlightens our human condition. We interrogate death and anxiety for the light that they shed on the unique kind of being that is ours. But whence do these separate lights borrow their light?

And this, of course, is the question of truth itself—the question that lies behind the dramatic scenario of *Being and Time*, and establishes the link between the earlier and later Heidegger, where some critics have seen only a drastic rupture.

II. Afternoon

The question of truth, truth as such, is likely to strike most of us as rather remote and far-fetched, or alternately, depending on our mood, as gratuitious and unnecessary because the matter is so obvious. More often than not we can harbor both prejudices without any sense that they may be contradictory. In fact, they may even tend to reinforce each other. It is so obvious what truth is that we need not ask about it; and yet it is at the same time something remote and hard to grasp just because it is woven so closely into the texture of our experience. The things directly at one's feet are always the hardest to see.

But if we do take a look we may be in for some surprises. We may find that the source of our alienation lies hidden at the center of this apparently trivial question.

At first glance the philosophical tradition might seem to confirm our conviction that the whole matter is altogether obvious. Aristotle, that luminous master of the commonplace, begins it with a definition: Truth is the correspondence of our thought with what is actually the case. Aristotle said some other things on the subject too; but no matter, the tradition congealed around this, and the Middle Ages codified it in the formula "*Veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*"—truth consists in the agreement of our thought with reality. We are thinking truly when our thinking is in accord with the facts as they are. Who can doubt this? This is self-evident common sense, and we should not seek to becloud it with puzzles. Indeed, we don't in the least seek to doubt it. It is the truth about truth—as far as it goes. But it speaks at a level of abstractness of which common sense remains unconscious and which in the end begets all manner of puzzles.

These puzzles are quick to appear as soon as we enter the modern era in philosophy with Descartes's dualism of mind and matter, subject and object. Mind and matter are radically different kinds of things; how then can we compare an idea in the mind to a thing outside the mind? For us to make the comparison, the thing outside must somehow come inside the mind. The question of truth now becomes one of consistency between my idea and my perception—between two different contents of my consciousness. Thus arises the well-known coherence theory of truth, according to which truth is a matter of our ever-widening and self-integrating consciousness. This gets rid of one set of puzzles, but brings another in its place. We seem now imprisoned in the mind and haunted by the ghost of a subjectivism that has bedeviled even the greatest among the modern philosophers.

But let us leave such puzzles to the classroom and return to this day in the everyday to see if we can find truth there.

I sit here at my desk as the afternoon wanes, struggling to work, only now and then raising my eyes to stare absently around me. Same old room, same old objects. I do not take notice, my attention is on my work and my eyes return to it. But I begin to be vaguely uneasy; something in the room is troubling me, but I do not even stop to think what it might be. A friend suddenly enters and says, "That picture is hanging askew," pointing to the painting that hangs on the wall directly across the room. And sure enough, that's what it is, that is what has been vaguely troubling me all this while: the picture has been hanging lopsided and I was really seeing it but not noticing it. Now the hidden fact leaps out and stands clear. And I experience that feeling of momentary ease and satisfaction that always comes with the resolution of any problem, even when it is as slight as this one.

In this ridiculously commonplace incident we witness nothing less than the happening of truth. Forgive this suddenly portentous language; but we have to hold fast to this tiny situation as a whole or we shall never see what truth is. Usually, phi-

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losophers take one part of the situation and find it sufficient. Truth has occurred, they say, because a statement has been made, "That picture is hanging askew," and the statement turned out to be true. And it was true because it corresponded with the fact: the picture hanging there on the wall is really lopsided.

But is this what really happened? Do we really compare a proposition with a fact? If I want to compare two coins, I set them beside each other and see if they match. Each coin must be equally accessible to me. In general, if I want to compare any two things at all, each must be equally evident to me. The fact would have to be evident (true) to me before the proposition arrived to bring us its truth.

Does anything happen like the following? I hear noises that somehow provoke the idea in my mind, "That picture is hanging askew"; I then exit quickly from the mind, garner a sense-perception from the picture; return inside the mind and compare the perception with my idea. Decidedly, our whole picture of things here has gone very much askew! What we have done, as it were, is to take a great pair of scissors and cut the single proposition out of the concrete situation in which it functioned and did its work; and then on this dislocated fragment we have constructed a fantastic and meaningless structure to build it back into the whole.

Language works differently from a point-by-point matching. Suppose my friend had simply said, "Look!" while pointing at the picture. The exclamation could have disclosed the lopsided picture just as well. Does it therefore "correspond" to —resemble in any way—the fact? Yet it has done the same job as the full proposition: it has brought something hidden into the open. Suppose there had been a curtain draped over the wall and my friend had pulled it aside to uncover the picture hanging askew. His action takes place out there in the open; we wouldn't think of locating it in somebody's mind. Yet our language, which here performed the same job of uncovering a fact, seems somehow infected with the virus of the "mental" and we think it has to be pushed back out of the world into the mind. It is as if we were to carry on a conversation with each other inside our separate heads. We forget that the primary function of language, if we have something to say and are not merely babbling, is to uncover something within the world, to bring it into the open; and it can do this only because it itself transpires within the open world.

The old comic strips used to show us truth dawning on one of their characters as an electric bulb lighting up in the head. These cartoonists seem to have gone to school with Descartes. Nor should we smile in too easy superiority here, for we ourselves, so deeply embedded are these notions, more often than not may be unconsciously thinking according to the same pattern. Nevertheless we should keep the image of light; only it is not an electric bulb flashing in our head when truth happens, but some portion of the world that has become illuminated. If we go looking for truth inside the mind we shall only find the mind already outside of itself in the world. When a new truth arises to change our minds, as we commonly say, it does so only in that it changes some portion of the world for us. The world here is taken to include all the things of nature as well as of the life of humans in history.

The means and provenance of illumination may vary greatly. Statements may be the instruments of enlightenment, but not the only ones. As soon as we are freed from the notion of the single proposition as the ultimate locus of truth, with each proposition carrying its truth on its back like a rider on a saddle, we are also freed toward understanding other modes through which truth may be realized. In particular, we might begin at last to ask seriously in what way truth may be embodied in works of art. Instead of squabbling, as philosophers will do, about the trivial matter of how that picture is hanging on the wall, we might ask the more important question, what truth is present in it. For a great painting (of which this is a reproduction) can light up a whole historical chapter of the human spirit for us. If we had nothing from the 18th and 19th centuries but their music, the profound differences of the human horizons within these two epochs would be overwhelmingly evident and clear to us. We cannot understand these truths of art within the framework of strictly propositional truth. Nor is it any more possible to understand the truth of literature, the form which uses language as its medium, within that framework.

What we have said so far, particularly on the instrumental aspects of language, is obviously related to the controversy launched by the pragmatists, William James and John Dewey, in the first years of this century by their all-out attack upon the correspondence theory of truth. Bertrand Russell, who was among their adversaries, found the Americans unsophisticated and crude. From what we have since come to know about the constructive nature of scientific theory, it turns out to be the pragmatists (on this matter, Dewey particularly) who were the more sophisticated—sophisticated because more imaginative. The scientist may construct models for which it becomes gratuitous and empty to ask for a point-by-point correspondence with each item of fact. The theory is tested as a whole.

In retrospect, the main issues of the controversy can now be sorted out more clearly. If truth is not to be embedded within the human context, including the context of language (as the pragmatists insisted it is), then the alternative forced upon us is a doctrine of independently subsisting propositions each of which has the rider of truth or falsity

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attached to it. Russell, then a Platonist, could embrace this position gladly, but it has not worn at all well. Nevertheless, the pragmatists could not shake off the correspondence view altogether, it clung to them like the can tied to the dog's tail, and they accepted it at key points—"in face to face verifications," *viz.*, where we are facing the thing directly—because they did not yet have the phenomenological understanding that for a thing to be directly evident does not imply any correspondence.*

The Greek word we translate as "true" is *alethes,* literally "unhidden." This word does not speak of the correspondence between a statement and a fact, between a mental judgment and a thing, between an ideal content and the matter of perception. It speaks only of something that has emerged from the hidden into the open. The word came into being in the earliest days of the Greek language, we know not how or when or what thoughts may have accompanied its formation. It emerged before the Greeks had become literate and produced grammarians and logicians. And it remains closer to the primal sense and function of language than the subtlest analyses of later grammar and logic. Heidegger did not arrive at his understanding of truth through a piece of ancient etymology. It came to him through prolonged reflection upon the doctrine of the proposition in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*; out of the stubborn effort to bring before our eyes—which is what phenomenology properly is—what the master's doctrine still concealed. And with this step Heidegger transforms the nature of phenomenology much more radically and decisively than by his spectacular analyses of anxiety and death. But having followed this path, we may also guard the Greek word as a talisman. As we shall see in a moment, it will also serve as a somber reminder of what remains alien and hidden to us in all of our truth.

Notice we do not say: the Greek word for true is *alethes*. That would be to impose ourselves as the standard by which to measure them, and then add a little dash of etymology by way of color. The simple fact of the matter is more drastic: the Greeks did not have a word for "true." They had only a word which meant: evident, manifest, open, present. Was this a deprivation on their part, a symptom of their relatively primitive state in comparison with ours? In fact, it was a distinct advantage. And if we follow them here, we shall not only learn to think a little more "Greekly," but we shall be able to see where truth is to be found in our everyday. We have simply to look for *ta alethea*—the things evident and manifest that we encounter there.

And indeed truth was with us at every step in the long day's journey through the everyday. Not poked away in some odd corner or other, or popping its head up at some unexpected and unusual juncture of events, but persisting through and within this day in which you and I, reader, have still to be. From the moment we opened our eyes a world was disclosed to us. Familiar faces, houses, streets, cars, trains—all stand out clearly to us. Wherever there is disclosure there is truth. To be in a world—any world—is insofarforth to be in the truth. The world so disclosed may be a tiny and unprepossessing affair, but we must hold fast to it nonetheless. However far from it our theorizing may soar, it must take off from and return here. Even when we seek to go behind this world and dismantle it piece by piece as mere appearance, we would still have to borrow our initial language and meanings from it.

And this day itself? Has it not also been something manifest and evident in its presence? Yet we cannot grasp it like the things that came and went and were present within it. They are visible and tangible, and it is not; yet it has been with us as persistently and as unnoticed as our breathing. Can we grasp presence itself? Yet it is closer and more present to us than any of the things that came to be present within it.

But someone might say: Why make a mystery of it, it is only a day, a segment of time? Alas, we do not escape so easily. When we undertook a journey through the everyday, reader, it was *this* present day and not any other. "Twenty-four hours" is an abstraction that could be tomorrow or yesterday but not this day in its presence. Nor can we capture this presence by assigning a date: "Today *is* . . ."—and filling in the blank with its calendar date. For it is precisely the "is" in this sentence-form that we wish to grasp, and tomorrow this date will not name the present.

Nor can we grasp this presence as the present instant of time. I look now at my watch and count off ten seconds. Ten jerky little jumps of the hand and ten "now's" have followed each other into and out of existence. Watch and ticking hand are things that are present. The counting also is done within this presence that envelops watch and ticking hand. The *now* thus becomes manifest only within and through presence, and therefore can never serve to define presence. Being, as presence, is manifest through time but can no more be captured under the forms of time than under the forms of space.

With this simple and enveloping fact of presence we have come upon being. Being manifests itself as presence. It is a reality neither remote nor abstract, but there all the time, pervading our day

* In general, pragmatism deserves great credit for stressing that the locus of truth is not in the isolated proposition but the total human context. Whether it grasped this context widely and deeply enough remains in question. For example, it never developed any account of the specific mode of truth of art. The subject is conspicuously absent from Dewey's *Art and Experience*, and is in fact a serious deficiency in an otherwise very valuable book.

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in the everyday throughout its most ordinary encounters. Whenever we said, "Here is . . . ," "There is . . . ," or "Today is . . . ," which are indispensable modes of ordinary expression, we were acknowledging presence. And within this presence we spoke of the ill-hanging picture. Even with such provisos constantly in mind, one takes up uncertainly this poor word "being," which is freighted with so many distortions from history. I would prefer instead to speak of the IS, if this usage did not seem even more arbitrary and barbarous. We have here to do with a struggle with words that is not of our arbitrary and willful choosing. We have to speak of this IS, which is not in the least like any distinct entity or thing, which has no definite characteristics, qualities, or relations like a thing; and we are to speak of it in a language geared to things, qualities, relations. And yet it is only in the light of this IS that we can talk at all about things, qualities, and relations. We shall have to use all the resources of language to circumvent this obstacle—an obstacle without which, paradoxically, we would not have language at all.

At the heart of what should be the most luminous and evident of all things, truth itself, we come upon a mystery before which we are suddenly aliens and strangers. Or have we ourselves, out of our own freedom, chosen not to be at home with it?

III. Night

We may have aroused false expectations that we have more truth than we do. We say, for example, that the world through which we move is illuminated to some degree. And, further, whatever world might open around us would have to be illuminated and would in fact be illuminated to the degree that it lay open before us. Thus wherever there is being there is truth. That would seem to give us a universe more radiant than the one we know.

The philosophers of the Middle Ages had formulated as one of their principles: *"Ens et verum convertuntur."* Being and truth are convertible —each implies the other. Whatever exists, to the degree that it exists, conforms to an idea of the divine mind. To the degree that it falls short of truth, it is accordingly deficient in its being. Here the universe overflows with the radiance of Christian theism.

It is a very different picture we are dealing with now. The world through which we move has to be illuminated in order for us to get around in it at all, but there are also vast patches, and even abysses, of darkness within it. The human animal is full of contradictions. Only a creature capable of truth is also capable of lying or deliberately deceiving himself. The gods gave men language and a tongue to tell lies with. Sham, deception, hypocrisy—these are distinctly human products as much as are the awesome bodies of knowledge that mankind has triumphantly built up for itself. Truth and untruth weave the seamless web of human nature, and history is the arena of their struggle.

The history of the Greeks tells us all we might want to know about these bizarre and contradictory human propensities for truth and untruth. The Greeks were the people of the light. The root for "light" runs through their verbs for speaking and saying: to utter something is to bring it into the light. The older poetic word for man is *phos:* a mortal creature of the light. The poet of their race, Homer, is characterized throughout, as Erich Auerbach has shown, by the desire to bring every detail of his story out of some hidden background into a clear, evenly-lit foreground. The Greeks created the clarities of geometry, logical thinking, philosophy. Yet the history of this people is also shot through with the most glaring kind of darkness. Nowhere else do we find such spectacular, almost superhuman, qualities of guile, deceit, treachery, alongside the most powerful gifts of mind, as in a Pausanias or Themistocles. The Greeks knew very well then why the *Letheia,* hiddenness, was to be preserved within the same word for the luminous and evident.

Oedipus is the tragedy of the struggle between light and darkness. The hero wishes to see, he will have the truth at all costs; and when the light finally bursts upon him, he puts out his eyes so that he will never see again. As he had been blind in the bright days of his glory, now in the light of his wisdom he sinks into another darkness. So the dramatist would teach us that light and darkness, truth and untruth, always commingle.

But surely this is a mere matter of human pathology, someone might say, and therefore the business of the psychologist, not the philosopher. Our surrogate of Greek drama is now psychoanalysis. In a secular society it seems to be the only ritual left us. The patient is supposed to be in search of his Oedipus complex; I suggest he is reenacting the Oedipus drama in a more fundamental sense —he is struggling for light against darkness. He wants, or ought to want, the truth about himself; but sometimes the more earnestly and energetically he sets about it, the more obstacles he puts in his own way. He is not yet free for the truth. All this is the well-known matter of "resistance," and the psychoanalysts tell us all about it; we have no need here for the philosopher.

Perhaps. But in the very moment you speak of "resistance" you use the word "freedom," and philosophy immediately begins to prick up its ears. Perhaps there is a more intimate relation between truth and freedom than we commonly think. We must be free for the truth; and, conversely, to be able to be open toward the truth may be our deepest freedom as human creatures. The capacity for untruth is not a mere private matter of personal psychopathology. Truth harbors within itself the tragic possibilities for untruth because of its intrinsic connection with freedom.

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Thus truth and untruth are inextricably mingled not only in the deeds of men of action, in tragic heroes, patients suffering through psychoanalysis, but in our theoretical efforts to understand. The light of a new scientific theory blinds us for a while, and sometimes a long while, toward other things in our world. The greater and more spectacular the theory, the more likely it is to foster our indolent disposition to oversimplify: to twist all the ordinary matters of experience to fit into the new framework, and if they do not, to lop them off. Newton's *Principia* dazzled two centuries with its light and blinded them to explain all human matters, even our moral virtues and vices, within the framework of mechanics. Another *Principia*, also out of Cambridge, that of Russell and Whitehead, seemed for several decades of this century to offer the key to all philosophical questions. Freud had some fundamental insights about infantile sexuality, and now some of the more zealous partisans of psychohistory want to persuade us that the true history of this century has to be written in terms of what went on in the nursery. Marx grasped the economic factor in history more deeply than anyone before him; and Marxist criticism interprets Kafka as a tool of capitalism.

The examples could be multiplied: in each case we take a partial truth and make it total. We become totalitarians of the mind; but we ourselves are our own victims, for we have imprisoned ourselves in a total ideology beyond which we cannot see. We are no longer free to let things be what they are, but must twist them to fit into the framework we impose. Yet we ourselves have freely chosen to surrender this freedom. Why? Because, like children afraid of the dark, we cannot abide to stand within mystery, and so must have a truth that is total. It may be helpful, then, to remember that any portion of reality with which we deal stands always within the encompassing presence of all that is. No doubt we can draw no specific conclusion for research therefrom. But if we let this presence recede altogether, if we make ourselves so alien to it that we forget it entirely, then we are so much the more likely to succumb to the blindness of one ideology or another—not excluding, by the way, that peculiar ideology of skepticism.

Let us return to our trivial case of the picture hanging askew on the wall. This fact, through the efficacy of language, was made present to us within the presence of this room. But the room is part of the house; and beyond the house is the more enveloping presence of the out-of-doors with whatever objects may be found there. To be is to be within a world, the borders of which can be indefinitely extended. Those further borders may be remote from what is luminously present, but not always; and however remote, the background is also always present with the foreground.

We walk now into the out-of-doors and it is night. Let us take up again, reader, our little fiction of a day in the everyday, with which this essay began, and round it off now appropriately with the night that closes this day.

The cold winter evening immediately enfolds us in its presence, in which the stars too, sparkling and crisp, stand out as present. The faintest sliver of a moon seems almost to borrow its light from their shining presence. Ah, there *is* Orion, ancient hunter, looming in the southeast, while Sirius, the Dog, has just cleared the tall trees near the horizon. The two, the Hunter and his Dog, will go on marching toward the west, marking off the hours within this present night; and then night after night will loom further west in the sky as they mark the progress of our world toward spring. Within the presence of this night these stars, like so many shining symbols, gather into themselves the procession of the seasons.

You and I know, of course, for the astronomers have told us, that these stars are almost unimaginably far away, and that their light now reaches us across the distance of years. Suppose one of these stars had already gone out; then what you and I are presently seeing is the star of several years back. This crisp clear night that envelops us harbors then its own deceptions. Here too, within this shining presence, there prevails as everywhere the eternal conflict that the Greeks knew between appearance and reality, semblance and truth.

The deception, however, is there only if we jump too quickly to conclusions. The reality that hides itself behind this presence is also manifest through it. We have to reflect that it was within the presence of certain phenomena that scientists were led to draw their conclusions about the speed of light. With pencil on paper they made their calculations evident and present to one another. The readings on their instruments had to be present and visible to them in order that they might correct the reading of their naked eye about the stars overhead. And their results, past and present, were gathered together into language in which their thought, though physically they could have been continents apart and centuries distant, could be present to each other. Presence, always presence. Only by the light of one presence can we correct the deception that may be harbored within another.

The night is so clear that if you look sharp you can even make out the faint stars of Orion's sword as they curve away from his glittering belt. The mighty Hunter faces squarely the Bull in the opposite quarter of the heavens. These stars suddenly leap into life with the myths of mankind. Myths, the calculations of astronomers, the procession of centuries, are gathered within the presence of this night. The *now* of measured time, the tiny and jerky pause of the second-hand in its sweep of the dial, is but a fragment within this presence; contained but not containing, and certainly never identical with presence. And if we reflect upon the

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long life of humankind upon this little planet of earth, against this unfathomable background of the stars, we are suddenly thrust into the mystery. Why is there this world? Why is there a world at all?

THE mystery may be put in various ways, each of them no doubt inadequate in its own fashion. Toward the end of the 17th century Leibniz uttered the mystery as a question: "Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?" For Wittgenstein in the 20th century the mystery is no longer to be expressed as a question. It is neither a problem to be resolved scientifically, nor a puzzle to be discarded by unraveling our language; and yet it persists: "*That* the world is," he exclaims, "is the mystical." Not how the world is; for science, though its task there is endless, can describe the myriad ways in which things are and are operant in relation to one another; but the sheer fact that there is a world at all—this must forever elude us. And there Wittgenstein stops and passes into silence. Leibniz, however, stays with his question, and we may accordingly dwell there a moment with his answer.

Why is there anything rather than nothing? Why is there a world at all? Existence may be a brute fact for which there is no accounting. But if there is a reason at all that a world exists, then Leibniz—in conformity with the tradition—gives the only possible rational answer to his own question. There is a world, there is existence or being, because there is one being whose existence is necessary. The nature of that being entails its own existence; and if we could intuit that nature we could grasp the necessity of this existence with the certainty and self-evidence with which we grasp an analytic proposition in logic or mathematics. The necessary being, of course, is God.

Such is the position of Western theism. Within this framework, from the high Middle Ages down through the 18th century, Western man experienced the meaning of beings and being. Or, following more Heideggerian language, it was always within this framework that beings were present and manifest to mankind.

This traditional theism, however, does not abolish the mystery, but only pushes it away into the distant and remote region of the divine nature. The more men reflected upon this nature the more absolutely incomprehensible it became to them. One could multiply its attributes or names to nine and ninety but each in turn was as verbally empty as the next. From the things of the world we could borrow no notion at all of what a necessary being would be like. Everything of which we have experience in this universe can be imagined not to exist. "If I can think of something existing," Hume said, "I can also think of it as not existing." A thing that necessarily existed, whose existence was intrinsic to its nature, would then be radically different from any kind of thing we know. And so radically different that we do not have any notion at all what sort of thing it might be, despite all the ink that theologians once shed on the subject. God is wholly other to us, and so other that He remains utterly incomprehensible. The nine and ninety attributes merely embroider a mystery.

Through the concrete practice of religion this theistic framework served to keep Western man somehow rooted to being. One existed, after all, within this whole scheme of things under the governance of God. And one's thoughts and feelings, one's life and death, had meaning ultimately in relation to this whole. But in pushing the mystery away from us into the remote and hidden region of the divine nature this theism may have done an immense damage to our Western consciousness. The mystery ceased to be enveloping and present. The universe passed into the disenchanted and secular aggregate of things. And now that this theistic framework has receded for us, when it is no longer the conscious or unconscious presupposition of our age, what becomes more and more questionable to our "alienated" age is whether we have not become rootless.

Heidegger would insist that we cannot push the mystery away from us since we are always within it. Its presence is presence itself. The mystery lurks in the nature of truth. Whether conscious of it or not, the Greeks hit upon something uncanny in their word for truth. They kept the privative or negative form—*A-letheia,* or un-hiddenness—and did not like other Indo-European languages pass over into some directly positive word like our own "truth." The positive word suggests a state or condition that has divested itself of any reference to its hidden opposite. But in the light of the privative word of the Greeks we must think of truth as the deprivation, the wrenching, or tearing something out of hiddenness; and in such a way that the hidden mystery persists in and through and around what is disclosed. The most ordinary truths of our everyday stand within this riddle as well as our speculations about the farthest galaxies. To go back to that simple and trivial disclosure from which we started: "Look, the picture *is* hanging askew"; and with these words a fact became present within the presence of our room. Pursue this presence far enough, and we stand now under this engulfing presence of the night with its near and distant stars.

No future discovery by humans will ever alter this situation. Science proceeds from the known to the unknown; but both known and unknown are grasped within the enveloping fact of existence. Any future analysis may refine the language by which we elicit the mystery but will never abolish it. And if new gods or a new revelation were to arrive in this tired world, our hearts might be lifted up, our will exalted, and we might learn again to live in the presence of the holy. But in that new dispensation, whatever it might be, the mystery

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would still persist and be present. The mystery was there for the first humans conscious enough for it to become present to them, and it will be there for the last who draw their breath upon this planet.

BUT ENOUGH for this evening. Under the circling vault of these stars we have had enough meditation to hold on to. The mood is neither somber nor elated. There are no blurred edges of "the mystical" about it. You have simply to be there and the mystery will be there for you too. The schoolboy hears his name called and answers "Present!" Here we call *Present* and our call calls us into presence.

A sound stirs in the thicket nearby, some cautious animal moves softly there. In the distance an unlikely owl hoots. And we are suddenly moved to think of all those other creatures beside man upon this earth who are not tortured by this question. Humans alone, among all the animal species, respond to this mystery. Is it too great a burden for us to bear?

We come back thus to the question of alienation from which this essay began. We are strangers in the universe in a way no other animal can be, for the mystery opens only to us. It is on this level that the ultimate alienation of man has to be faced. We may chatter about alienation as a cultural or social phenomenon, but all such talk falls short of the deepest dimension in which man is a stranger in his universe. And yet this dimension of strangeness is the peculiar home where he is drawn closest to all that is. Any utopian social arrangement, where what is facilely called "alienation" would cease, would make humankind most truly alienated from its own being. Creatures of a void without knowing it.

Humankind, conscious of its death, must also bear the burden of this mystery. Is it too great, amid our other anxieties, for us to carry? It makes us feel more homeless within the world than any animal can be. Yet is it altogether a burden? Is it not rather a gift too? It is given to us and to no other animal to stand within the mystery. It claims us as its own and we are at home there where no other animal can be. Tonight the stars shine overhead like old and reliable friends. This cosmos is ours to the degree that we are still able to be enthralled by its stupendous presence.

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"The Giant Killer": Drink & the American Writer

Alfred Kazin

When drunk, I make them pay and pay and pay and pay.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

AMERICA has always been a hard-drinking country despite the many places and times in which alcohol has been forbidden by law. Even in Puritan days Americans were amazingly hard drinkers. It is history that liquor up to the Civil War was cheap as well as plentiful. In the first decades of the 19th century, spirits cost all of 25 cents a gallon domestic, and $1 imported. From 1818 to 1862 there were no taxes whatever on American whiskey, and it took the federal government's need of revenue during the Civil War to change things. The temperance movement, the Prohibitionist movement, the anti-Saloon League were all powerful church-supported bodies, but no more powerful than the "liquor interests" and the freedom and ease that American males acquired for a 4-cents glass of beer in the saloon. America's entry into World War I and the need to conserve grain finally put Prohibition across in 1918. Whereupon the line was marked between what H. L. Mencken called the "booboisie" and the party of sophistication. In the 20's, drinking was the most accessible form of prestige for would-be sophisticates; and this continued to be the case within the professional and wealthy classes as the "tea party" of the 20's became the cocktail party of the 50's (a time when the clientele of Alcoholics Anonymous showed a more representative cross-section of middle-class society than Congress).

But even by these heavy-drinking standards, there is something special about the drinking of so many American writers. Of course there have been famous literary drunks in other countries—Burns, Swinburne, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Paul Verlaine, and those two fat boys, Dylan Thomas and Evelyn Waugh. The Russians, famous for knocking themselves out, have produced particularly lurid, despairing, melodramatic poet-drinkers like Sergei Yesenin (the husband of Isadora Duncan) who wrote his suicide note in his own blood. But in 20th-century America the booze has been not just a lifelong "problem" and a killer. It has come to seem a natural accompaniment of the literary life—of its loneliness, its creative aspirations and its frenzies, its "specialness," its hazards in a society where values are constantly put in money terms.

In fact, though no one ever talks about it very much, booze has played as big a role in the lives of modern American writers as talent, money, women, and the longing to be top dog. Of the six American Nobel Prize winners in literature, three —Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner—were alcoholics, compulsive drinkers, for great periods of their lives. Two others, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, were hard drinkers. Hemingway was also a lover of wine, regularly had champagne with lunch when he lived in Cuba, and (at least in warm climes) drank for pleasure rather than to knock himself out.

The list of American literary drunks is very long. And despite all the fun they must have had, the post-mortem record is full of woe. Scott Fitzgerald (dead at forty-four) and Ring Lardner (dead at forty-eight) were celebrated, dedicated, hopeless alcoholics. Hemingway used to say that a drink was a way of ending a day. But John O'Hara swore off at forty-eight only when he was rushed to a hospital at the point of death from a bleeding ulcer. "A hell of a way for booze to treat me after I've been so kind to it. I used to watch W. C. Fields putting away the martinis at Paramount, and say to myself, 'That's what I want to be when I get big.' Well, I almost made it."

Among the famous suicides, Jack London and John Berryman were alcoholics; Hart Crane had a problem. Poe, the only hard-case alcoholic among the leading 19th-century writers, finally died of drink one election day in Baltimore, 1849, when, already far gone and in total despair, he accepted all the whiskey that was his payment for being voted around the town by the corrupt political machine. Jack London wrote a fascinating account of his alcoholism in *John Barleycorn*. At first, he wrote, liquor seemed an escape from the narrowness of women's influence into "the wide free world of men." A wanderer, making his living

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from the sea, could always find a home in a saloon. But "suicide, quick or slow, a sudden spill or a gradual oozing away through the years, is the price John Barleycorn exacts. No friend of his ever escapes making the just, due payment."

As a sailor, London was sometimes drunk for three months at a time. Though he could never figure out just why he drank, he hauntingly described his death wish in one extraordinary passage. He had stumbled overboard, and, drunk, was swimming for his life in the Carquinez Strait in the Bay of San Francisco.

> Some wandering fancy of going out with the tide suddenly obsessed me. I had never been morbid. Thoughts of suicide had never entered my head. And now that they entered, I thought it fine, a splendid culmination, a perfect rounding off of my short but exciting career. I who had never known girl's love, nor a woman's love, nor the love of children. . . . I decided that this was all, that I had seen all, lived all, been all, that was worthwhile, and that now was the time to cease. That was the trick of John Barleycorn, laying me by the heels of my imagination and a drug-dream dragging me to death.

J. P. Marquand, Wallace Stevens, E.E. Cummings, and Edna St. Vincent Millay did not write about their "problem." Edwin Arlington Robinson, Dorothy Parker, Dashiell Hammett, Theodore Roethke, Edmund Wilson did write or talk about theirs. They were all serious drinkers, some more than others, some more openly than others. There is reason to believe that W. H. Auden, a big martini man, voluntarily or involuntarily did himself in by regularly (like Marilyn Monroe) mixing drink with sleeping pills. The Englishman Malcolm Lowry, who understandably felt part of the American scene (for he did his best work in and about North America), died in an acute state of alcoholic distress.

THE high point of all-out drinking came in the 20's. Scott Fitzgerald said that he and his generation "drank cocktails before meals like Americans, wines and brandies like Frenchmen, scotch-and-soda like the English. This preposterous melange that was like a gigantic cocktail in a nightmare." Edmund Wilson in a "Lexicon of Prohibition" (1927) solemnly listed over a hundred words for drunkenness "now in common use in the United States. They have been arranged, as far as possible, in order of the degrees of intensity of the conditions which they represent, beginning with the mildest states and progressing to the more disastrous." The list began with *lit, squiffy, oiled,* and concluded with *to have the whoops and jingles* and *to burn with a low blue flame.*

In his notebook of the 20's, Wilson described himself as "daze-minded and daze-eyed" and sobering up only when he read about Sacco and Vanzetti. An editor at *Vanity Fair,* Helen Lawrenson, remembers "hair-raising rides in cars with drivers so pissed they couldn't tell the street from the sidewalk." Robert Benchley was usually so far gone that he no longer went to the plays he reviewed for the old *Life.* A delicious confusion of the senses operated in such key books of the 20's as *The Great Gatsby.* ". . . Everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it. . . . Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air. . . ." "There was blue music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars."

Despite all this gorgeous prose, the background of *The Great Gatsby* is raw alcohol. Gatsby made his pile as a bootlegger and then bought up side-street drugstores in Chicago that sold grain alcohol over the counter. And Fitzgerald's drunkenness, which gave such malicious satisfaction to Hemingway (who, with his overdeveloped competitive sense, knew that stopping in time would give him an advantage over "rummies" like Fitzgerald), was so involved in his need to be picturesque, to ease the money and sexual strains in his life, to keep up with his crazy wife Zelda, that only a writer of such powerful and desperate imagination could have taken it. Destructiveness and charm went hand in hand, all "the good times" and the most heart-sinking depression. A friend said about them: "If you want to get your furniture antiqued up, you want to get the Fitzgeralds in—they'll antique it up in a single night—why they'll put in their own wormholes in the furniture with cigarette ends."

Fitzgerald described his feeling about himself in the weakness of Dr. Dick Diver, the charming psychiatrist in *Tender Is the Night* who sold out and comforted himself more and more by taking two fingers of gin with his coffee. Writers are not the best analysts of their own alcoholism, but psychiatry (a notorious failure in curing *compulsive* drinkers) is not much better about pinpointing *the* reason why. The many thousands of personal confessions recited in AA meetings add up to the fact that the addict to alcohol, like the addict to anything else, believes that he can *will* a change within himself by ingesting some material substance. Like so many of the things we do to ourselves in this pill-happy culture, drinking is a form of technology. People drink for hereditary reasons, nutritional reasons, social reasons. They drink because they are bored, or tired, or restless. People drink for as many reasons as they have for wanting to "feel better." Drinking cuts the connections that keep us anxious. Alcohol works not as a stimulant but as a depressant. But it is exactly this

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"unwinding," relaxing, slowing-down, this breaking down of so many induced associations and inhibitions, that creates the welcome but temporary freedom from so many restraints, tensions, obligations. Civilization is a tyrant, "hell is other people," and we all need to escape the "ordeal of civility."

But there are periods and occasions when drinking is in the air, even seems to be a moral necessity. The 20's marked the great changeover from the old rural and small-town America. It also marked the triumph in the marketplace of "advanced," wholly "modern" writers and books, ideas, and attitudes. They all entered into the big money and the big time at once. The glamorous, best-selling, restlessly excited Fitzgeralds would never be reconciled to anything less. The Fitzgeralds' drinking began as a perpetual party. Then Zelda went off her rocker, the country went bust, *Tender Is the Night* was not a best-seller, Fitzgerald was writing for Hollywood. When he was doing *Gone with the Wind*, David Selznick fired Fitzgerald for not coming up with "funny" lines for Aunt Pittypat. Gavin Lambert reports that "being taken off the script was a disastrous blow to Fitzgerald's already shaky confidence. He resumed the long on-again-off-again drinking bout that led to his unrequited love affair with the movies. And between the drinking bouts and brief assignments on B pictures, he began *The Last Tycoon*."

FITZGERALD drunk was pleasanter to be with than Sinclair Lewis, who regularly passed out. One of the most serious drinkers in American history was Eugene O'Neill, who came from a family of serious drinkers. His brother Jamie was a confirmed alcoholic at twenty. His father, the famous actor James O'Neill, regularly had a cocktail before breakfast, and became so possessive about his liquor that he locked it up in the cellar out of the reach of his equally thirsty sons.

During his one stormy year at Princeton O'Neill once finished off a bottle of absinthe in a dormitory room reeking of burning incense. He went berserk, tore up all the furnishings in his room, and tried to shoot a friend. When the friend escaped and returned with help, they "found the place a shambles and O'Neill, wide-eyed, still on a rampage. It took all four of the other students to subdue him and tie him up." Later, say Barbara and Arthur Gelb in their biography, the slightest upset would send O'Neill to the bottle—and it did not matter what the bottle contained. He once drank a mixture of varnish and water; another time, camphor-flavored alcohol. Louis Sheaffer reports that while still a very young man, worried about his clandestine marriage to Kathleen Jenkins and the imminent birth of an unwanted child, O'Neill hacked up everything in his parents' hotel room in New York. O'Neill's mother (herself a drug addict) "never knew what to expect of him, whether childlike he would turn to her and James for comfort or present the face of a dark brooding stranger impossible to reach." Shortly after this, O'Neill attempted suicide by drinking veronal.

O'Neill claimed that "I never try to write a line when I'm not strictly on the wagon." But he was never able to stay off the booze completely in the crucial twenty years 1913-33, during which he became the most significant playwright America had ever had. It was, however, in the succeeding twenty years (he died in 1953), a dry period by the direst necessity (he had Parkinson's disease), that he wrote his best five plays—*Ah, Wilderness!, A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Long Day's Journey into Night.*

The most boldly determined, all-out, to-hell-with-the-consequences literary soak of the 20's was Ring Lardner. He appears as Abe North in *Tender Is the Night*, a tall, morosely witty, perpetually disoriented creature getting drunk in the Ritz bar in Paris at nine in the morning. Poor Abe, witty yet lost. "Presently he was invited to lunch, but declined. It was almost Briglith, he explained, and there was something he had to do at Briglith. A little later, with the exquisite manners of the alcoholic that are like the manners of a prisoner or a family servant, he said goodbye to an acquaintance, and turning around discovered that the bar's great moment was over as precipitately as it had begun." After an involved fracas in a Paris hotel, Abe says to Dick Diver, "Could I annoy you for a drink?" "There's not a thing up here," Dick lied.

> Resignedly Abe shook hands with Rosemary; he composed his face slowly, holding her hand a long time and forming sentences that did not emerge. She laughed in a well-bred way, as though it were nothing unusual to watch a man walking in a slow dream. Often people display a curious respect for a man drunk, rather like the respect of simple races for the insane. Respect rather than fear. There is something awe-inspiring in one who has lost all inhibitions, who will do anything. Of course we make him pay for his moment of superiority, his moment of impressiveness.

The real Ring Lardner, almost ten years older than Fitzgerald, was much funnier than Abe North. "How do you look when I'm sober?" he once said to a flamboyant actor. But he was just as determined to drink himself to death. And he did. The inoperable final "Why?" haunts us particularly in his case. He came from a sturdy, cultivated Midwest family, was deeply in love with his wife, raised four remarkable sons. It was because Lardner had been "brought up right" that he became fascinated by what illiterate ball players did to the

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language. Ring Jr. reports his father saying—"Where do they get that stuff about my being a satirist? I just listen." Looking a little like Buster Keaton, sad-faced and quiet except when he had something to say right on target, old-looking enough in his teens to fool saloon keepers, Lardner was from his teens in Niles, Michigan, a citizen of saloon society. There (before Prohibition) a man could be quiet with himself, drink to his heart's content, and listen. Lardner's mother thought Lardner and his brothers (fellow soaks) were putting in extra hours at choir practice.

Lardner was an amazing drinker, a real hard case, even before he was transformed from a journalistic funny man to a literary figure. "I have a reputation—an unfortunate one—for infinite capacity." Living near each other in Great Neck (where Gatsby had his dream house), he and Fitzgerald, easily amused by each other's jokes and each other's alcoholism, would sometimes drink through the night. Ring would not go home on a weekday morning until his sons had left for school. Lardner had greater capacity than Fitzgerald and maintained his physical coordination when drunk for many more years than Fitzgerald did. But Ring Jr., the only living witness, thinks that "Scott may have been fascinated by Ring as the image of his own future; even though he could sleep off a drunk and get back to work with much more ease than his older friend, he must have known that he was heading in the same direction. . . . Even the pattern he came to of setting a specific beginning and ending date for going on the wagon was Ring's."

With a large family to support, Lardner pragmatically set himself a fixed period of abstinence and a fixed quota of work to accomplish in it. Despite the legends of his knocking out a story under the influence of a quart or so, he told his son: "No one, ever, wrote anything as well even after one drink as he would have done without it." But once the allotted work was finished, Lardner just as determinedly went back to the bottle. He had once thought of Prohibition as an enforced solution to his problem, but he soon saw this was an unattainable goal. He told the actress Jean Dixon that if he smelled beer he would drink it and when he drank it he would go on to something else. He went on bats for three months at a time. He knew exactly what he was doing—and could have himself written the decisive "first step" of AA's famous "twelve steps" that an alcoholic must go through in order to recover: "We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable." After Lardner's death in 1933, Fitzgerald wrote: "One is haunted not only by a sense of personal loss but by a conviction that Ring got less percentage of himself on paper than any other American author of the first flight."

Alcoholics, like other prodigies, begin young. Faulkner, always a crazy reckless drinker, came from a family of reckless drinkers. His father and grandfather were known for sprees, and would be taken off at regular intervals to the Keeley Institute, fifteen miles from Memphis, for the "cure." He himself was introduced to liquor by this same grandfather who let him taste the "heeltaps" left over in a glass from toddies. On the famous hunting trips, a necessary retreat for the men, when a drinking bout might go on for three or four days, Faulkner drank the powerful corn liquor made in illegal stills concealed in the hills and pine barrens. At eighteen, Faulkner drank in town with the town drunk. At twenty, he tried to get into World War I by joining the Royal Canadian Flying Corps, but cracked up in a training plane—in which he kept a crock of bourbon. When Prohibition descended upon the land, Faulkner showed ingenuity as well as determination. He drank white mule made by county moonshiners, clear corn liquor in the dice joints, and frequented Memphis brothels because they had a better variety of whiskey. He even did a little bootlegging and "rum-running" in order to make some money. Even when forced to work for a spell in the local post office (he quit because he was at the mercy of "every son of a bitch with a two-cent stamp"), Faulkner was able to console himself with a bottle of "white lightning." He is remembered for saying: "There is no such thing as bad whiskey, some are just better than others."

Faulkner was a social drinker, a private drinker, a convivial drinker, a morose drinker. He drank because it was a habit in the Deep South for men to drink. He drank to ease himself and to knock himself out as a result of the screaming exhaustion —"I feel as though all my nerve ends were exposed"—that came after the tension of writing *The Sound and the Fury*. After finishing this great book, he said to a friend, "Read this. It's a real son of a bitch," and went on a tear for several days without eating. His compulsive drinking regularly led to one or two serious illnesses a year for thirty years. Some of the side experiences were alcoholic exhaustion, DT's, whiskey ulcers, electroshock therapy, the many nicks and gashes in his head, broken ribs, falling down stairs, falls from horses, broken vertebrae, sweats, shakes, organic damage, fibrillation, blackouts.

He sometimes (and probably more and more) drank while writing. When he lived in Greenwich Village at one period, he wrote in small pocket notebooks he bought at Woolworth's for a nickel —occasionally sipping gin as he wrote. Faulkner did not drink in order to *start* writing. He may have been repressed as a man, but certainly not as a writer. "You just keep the words coming," he said. Like so many great novelists, he was productive because his mind kept everything he had seen,

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heard, lived. As a man he seems to have found existence intolerable from time to time. Who can say just why? But although he could do anything he liked with words, his "drinking habit" inflamed and spoiled his writing as much as it damaged his body.

Of course writing, for Faulkner, was already a form of intoxication. But the insensately long sentences that he went in for suggest the abandon that so often comes to a drinker as the "connections that make up anxiety" are broken off. But it is just connections that make writing—the line-by-line thinking that the writer undergoes so that the reader will see what is in the writer's mind. It was disastrous for Faulkner to lose the thread. After the period 1929-36 in which he composed all his greatest works—*The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, As I Lay Dying, Absalom! Absalom!*—Faulkner wrote windy books like *Intruder in the Dust, Requiem for a Nun, A Fable, The Town.* Donald Newlove has put it more harshly than anyone else:

> Something disastrous happened when Faulkner turned forty-nine; whatever grip he had on his alcoholism faded, and so did the hot focus of his imagination. He wrote for twenty-two years, but his brain was stunned. What we get is the famous mannered diction, senatorial tone, a hallucinated rhetoric of alcohol full of ravishing if empty glory. Dead junk compared to the sunburst pages of *The Sound and the Fury*. . . . Faulkner's ruinous pose as a master of Latinate diction is the direct result of alcoholic hardening of the ego. . . .

After the 20's, later writers like John O'Hara and John Steinbeck did their best to keep up with the careless drinking style they had learned as young men in the 20's. But there was a notable lack of joy. O'Hara as a reporter had been known as a saloon fighter. When he went off the booze, totally, to save his life, he admitted that he still missed scotch and beer. He made up for it by working all through the night, night after night. He wrote so many stories that he virtually ran out of titles, and he made so much money that he boasted that no one anywhere—wanna bet?—had *ever* written short stories as well as John O'Hara. O'Hara sober was just as truculent as O'Hara drunk. Hemingway said that he could beat Tolstoy. O'Hara went after younger writers.

In Algeria during World War II André Gide heard that Steinbeck was in town as a war correspondent and tried to meet him. But Steinbeck was always drunk. Gide told Malcolm Muggeridge that he had tried in the evening, at lunch time, and finally at breakfast, but always with the same result. Dashiell Hammett, whom Lillian Hellman lovingly portrays as a Southern gentleman extraordinarily rational, resourceful, self-possessed,and informed, grimly drank himself into insensibility at regular intervals. Thomas Wolfe amazed Fitzgerald by his ability to keep things in an uproar. One night, when they were having an argument in the street, Wolfe gesticulated so vehemently that he struck a power line support, snapped the wire, and plunged the whole community into darkness. Bernard De Voto, like so many writer-drinkers of the second order, gave the impression of imitating more illustrious writers. He was a martini snob even more tiresome than the usual wine snob. Gancia was the only vermouth to mix with gin; Noilly Prat was too changeable.

Malcolm Lowry would have been shocked by all this twaddle. Lowry, one of the most stupendous drinkers in all recorded history, wrote the greatest novel I know about an alcoholic, *Under the Volcano* (1947). There is nothing like it in modern literature. It is one of the great 20th-century novels in language, form, and in its amazing visionary demonstration of the tie between the alcoholic hero's crumbling life in the 1930's and the disasters about to fall on the Western world. Geoffrey Firmin, a former British consul in Mexico, always called "the Consul," drinks anything, drinks all the time, drinks as a way of life, drinks as a way of living and dying at once. His final collapse and his murder at the hands of fascist thugs take place on a single day in 1939, "The Day of the Dead." The deadly atmosphere that has collected around the helpless Consul finally becomes a signal that the Western world is sliding into war. *Under the Volcano* could have been achieved only by an imagination that already had the qualities of drunkenness. Lowry's imagination was made more itself by drink. Then he died of it, probably feeling that it had all been worth it.

THE best-known drinker of my own literary generation was the poet John Berryman (1914-72). Berryman was a natural celebrity. Poets often are, for their personality and their works seem so much of a piece. The language of a good poem is so close to fundamental emotion, to the secrets of the human heart, that the poet is traditionally honored as a prophet among men. Flamboyant poets convinced of their importance make messes in public, delight their humble students, the literary gossips, the jealous psychiatrists (who also deal in the language of emotion, but not so memorably), and get a reputation for genius based on the disorderliness of poets from François Villon to Dylan Thomas. The poet Theodore Roethke wrote a very subdued, miniature poetry about his "lost childhood." But he was an enormous hulking fellow with violent personal emotions and a heavy drinker's gift for asserting himself loudly in public. He regularly put on such a show that it was easier to cheer big Ted Roethke on than to admit that his poems were slight, sometimes inaudible experiments in self-pity.

But of the American poets, it was Berryman who made more literary capital out of his "prob-

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lem" than anyone since Lowry. Liquor made Berryman more and more special to himself—and famous. He would not have become so famous without it. Berryman was pictured by the caricaturist David Levine with an enormous bottle down his back. It is typical of his celebrity as a boozer that while he was still known mostly to a small literary audience, he was given a big story in *Life* that showed him and his enormous beard convivial in an Irish pub. After he killed himself in the winter of 1972 by jumping from a bridge off Minneapolis onto the frozen Mississippi, his unfinished novel about the "cure," *Recovery*, was published, followed by a novel, *The Maze*, by his ex-wife Eileen Simpson.

Despite his furious drinking, Berryman doggedly pursued his career. He published ten books of poetry and a brilliant critical biography of Stephen Crane. His most famous work, because it is the most personal, is the 308 "Dream Songs"—monologues "about an imaginary character (not the poet, not me) named Henry, a white American in early middle age sometimes in blackface, who has suffered an irreversible loss and talks about himself sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third, sometimes even in the second; he has a friend, never named, who addresses him as Mr. Bones and variants thereof. . . . *Requiescant in pace*. . . ."

Of course "Henry" is "not the poet, not me"—there were too many Berrymans. What is most striking about these poems is the crossing of so many selves. Only a white man in "blackface" could suggest the layer on layer of disguise and personality that went to make John Berryman! The poems are a fantastic performance in the many voices forever buzzing in John Berryman's mind—the voices of himself as teacher and writer, of his supposed accusers, of the longing to see an end to his self-torturing confabulations with himself, of his dead father and of himself as a father who does not see his own son.

The jauntiness of tone that Berryman brought to his sorrows!

> I'm scared a lonely. Never see my son,
> easy be not to see anyone,
>
> * * *
>
> I'm scared a only one thing, which is me,
> from othering I don't take nothing, see,
> for my hound dog's sake
> But this is where I livin, where I rake
> my leaves and cop my promise, this' where we
> cry oursel's awake.

In another "Dream Song" he asks:

> Why drink so, two days running?
> two months, O season, years, two decades running?
> I answer (smiles) my question on the cuff:
> Man, I been thirsty. . . .

Berryman was "authoritative," cocky, even at his lowest. Snooty, heartbreaking, maudlin, clearly written under booze, quick to portray every side of the divided self that emerges under booze, these poems are the human heart's rushed shorthand. They are also in Berryman's most maddeningly allusive style. You have to know a lot about Berryman's friends, girls, most secret worries, and especially his relations with the best poets dead and alive to know what he is referring to more than half the time. The poems are shockingly alive in their emotional distress and in the poet's determination to keep things *looking* good. Disconnected on purpose, disconnected by necessity, abrupt, brilliant at times, and just as often throwaway, the poems are obsessive about the need to move on, to get out of difficulties, to move out of this world if finally necessary. This is what makes Berryman's stuff finally so compelling. The life and the book are one. The force of his personality (not of the poems in themselves) is overwhelming.

WHAT explains all this excessive, delirious, and often fatal drinking? Hemingway had a theory about it. He called booze "the Giant Killer," and he could have added that the Giant is America itself, or rather the "bitch-goddess" Success which William James said was the great American deity. The history of American writers even in the 19th century was already marked by unnatural strain, physical isolation, alienation from the supposedly "sweet and smiling aspects of American life." But it is significant that the only known literary alcoholic of the period was Poe, a magazine writer and editor of genius always desperate for money, who helped to swell the marketplace psychology among American writers. And it was just when that psychology became rampant, as in the 20's the big money and the big time began to seem possible for serious and "advanced" writers, that the really big drinkers emerged.

There were no such "rebels" (in their own eyes) as those in the literary class. They were "different" from "ordinary" Americans because they lived by their wits. They had been around, they knew things. In a "Memoir of the Drinking Life," Pete Hamill shows what an assist to your fantasies of being Hemingway, of knowing things, it can be to drink:

> For a writer, the life was particularly attractive. I learned a lot of things in saloons: about my craft, human beings, about myself. . . . We drank in all the bars of Brooklyn, and later in McSorleys, and the old Cedar Tavern (looking at Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock), and the White Horse (looking for Dylan Thomas), and a lot of other places. . . . Drink was the great loosener, the killer of shyness, the maker of dreams and courage. . . .

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But in fact the literary rebels always yearned for success as much as any benighted Babbitt. Only in America have first-class novelists been driven to "prove" their acceptability by *also* becoming best-sellers. Even poetry has to sell, or at least make you famous. Berryman, for example, who worshipped other famous writers in America and knew all about them, was generally disappointed in himself. He wanted fame so badly that he was always hard on himself. He was far from being modest. Of course he had non-literary sorrows. His father was a suicide and probably an alcoholic. Berryman went through all the instability, hysteria, hypochondria, the broken marriages, the "bad sex," the blackouts that are indissolubly the causes *and* effects of excessive drinking. But fundamentally he was driven by competition with other poets and was determined to outdo them.

It was, then, the drive for success of every kind, the hunger for prestige, fame, and money, that drove all these writers to drink: the burden put upon the creative self by so many contradictory pressures was overwhelming and cried out for relief. They drank to escape the hunger; they drank to disguise it from themselves and others; they drank to be different from the unsophisticated "booboisie"; they drank to be the same as the "regular fellers"; they drank to acquire *class*. In one form or another the Giant exacted a final sacrifice—themselves—from the writers who tried to kill their Great Fear over and over again.

JAMES WHORTON

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The Judaism of History

Chaim Raphael

LIKE Hillel of old, one is often challenged to sum up briefly what being Jewish means. One can get away with anything by answering, as Hillel seemed to do, in one sentence; but it is harder when everything has to be defined, as in a recently published study, *A History of Judaism,** which is in two volumes running to a thousand pages. The aim, as stated in the preface, is "to provide Jews with self-understanding," but one finishes this detailed and scholarly work less with a sense of clarity than with a question mark.

The book might have been more appropriately called "The Judaism of History," since it concentrates on the intellectual analysis of a religion, a faith (to use a broader word), or an attitude of mind (to be broader still) which was valid overwhelmingly for the whole Jewish people until about a century ago but is a very uncertain key to "self-understanding" today. To make this distinction is not to be finicky. The ideas associated with being Jewish today have evolved from the past, but in what forms, and to what extent, does the past still govern? It can be misleading to assume that some timeless religious process is still at work and that Jews become more "authentic" the more closely they tune into it.

The two authors of *A History of Judaism* (each responsible for one volume) might go along with this distinction, but one is a little wary of their language, as when they announce grandiloquently in their preface that they are attempting "an account of the spiritual odyssey of the Jewish people." It will not be enough, they say, to deal with Judaism as "a creed, a code of conduct, or cultic system." In analyzing the writings of Jewish teachers in their social setting, they aim to cover "the entire intellectual culture of the Jewish people and the phenomena that have significantly molded its inner life." It seems a good deal to attempt even in a thousand pages.

We can, however, ignore the hyperbole of "the entire intellectual culture," etc. In effect, the authors restrict their coverage to religious subjects—God and man, law and dogma, fate and free will, sin and redemption, suffering and hope—which can be taken in coherently. It is still doubtful, though, whether the mass of contemporary Jews actually look for self-understanding in this way, finding roots in a long-developing intellectual process. They may be aware that Jewishness started with something way back, yet its expression comes to them today in terms of a social situation, an awareness of being "different," with which they have to deal here and now. If believing in one God is what Judaism is about, they can probably identify more readily with the archaism and poetry of a biblical psalm or a chapter of Isaiah than with the involuted formulations of scholars through the ages. Beyond this, if one is to judge from their instinctive responses to the world around them, their beliefs seem to be an expression of their sense of kinship with other Jews.

Would life be richer in religious terms, would Jews feel clearer in motivation (the purpose of "self-understanding"), if their consciousness were reinforced by a detailed awareness of past Jewish thought as distilled in *A History of Judaism*? It is laudable to offer it, and the roll-call of writers is certainly impressive in numbers and timespan. The hope seems to be that this colorful tapestry (or "odyssey") will assert its own relevance. The contemporary Jew will be able to identify with historical Judaism as a unified living organism, developing coherently through Abraham, Moses, Samuel, two or three Isaiahs, Ezekiel, Daniel, Yohanan ben Zakkai, Saadia, Judah Halevi, Maimonides, the 12th-century "saints" of Germany, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Karo, the Baal Shem, the Vilna Gaon, Moses Mendelssohn, Judah Leib Gordon, and Samson Raphael Hirsch—to name but a few of the myriad characters who cross these pages. One can admire the analysis, the grouping of disparate writers to show influences, the selection of apt quotations. One feels attracted by this or that character and would like to know more. One gets glimpses of intellectual dilemmas that echo our own. History, if well written, is its own justification: one is drawn into the lives of different people in different ages, and if they are one's own ancestors this yields an additional, peculiarly personal, interest. At one level one feels completely at home. Yet with equal validity, many will feel that it is all utterly remote.

WHAT was the content, as documented in this book, of the Judaism of history? It was governed by the concept of a divinely-inspired system of law relating to conduct in every conceivable situation. Rabbis and scholars through the ages therefore concentrated on this, though more sporadically some of them also explored the implications of Judaism as a creed. Taking the last point further, we learn, through many illustrations, that the philosophical argument for Judaism always centered on the attempt to find a place for "reason" that would lie comfortably with the demands of "faith." "Reason"

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* Volume I: *From Abraham to Maimonides*, by Daniel Jeremy Silver; Volume II: *Europe and the New World*, by Bernard Martin. Basic Books, Volume I, 476 pp., Volume II, 526 pp., $38.50 the set.

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meant the application of one's mind to available evidence, but even with the most sophisticated of philosophers, the "evidence" was history as told in the Bible. Being a Jew through all the centuries involved a literal belief that the Creator of the Universe had chosen the Jewish people, given them His Torah, allotted them a place on earth that was uniquely theirs, and continued to maintain a direct beneficent interest in them, even though in ways that He alone really understood. Until the spreading of political (and cultural) emancipation in the last century, this unshakable set of beliefs was paralleled in an intensely inward-looking social life, expressing a self-absorption—a sense of difference from other people—that was dominant totally. Kinship and exclusiveness were facts of nature, as clear to the outside world as to the Jews themselves.

Kinship has survived, and in new forms—especially the fact of Israel—that give it amazing power. But the authors of this work seem most anxious to identify the ongoing *religious* essence of the Jewish experience, and it is on this point that the message of the past may be misleading. God may not be dead, but surely His overall absorption with His people—as portrayed in legal ordinances in the Talmud—is not a central reality for Jews today. During the last hundred years the Jews have become overwhelmingly a kinship of humanists, ready enough to enjoy the sentimental "family" associations of their ancient past but without any kind of faith in the explicitly supernatural basis of it all. The last chapters of *A History of Judaism* do refer briefly to these developments, but without a frank evaluation of what must be a decisive element in contemporary Jewish "self-understanding."

ONE can identify four main reasons behind the temptation, shared by many writers on Jewish subjects, to play down the idea that there has been a decisive break in religious consciousness for the great mass of Jews today.

The first—and most obvious—is that side-by-side with the visible spread of religious laxity, we have also witnessed in our times the strengthening of absolute Orthodoxy in *some* sections of the Jewish people. If one is looking for continuity, here it is. The Orthodox are completely in tune with the Judaism of history, accepting as they do the literal validity of every word of the Bible and the whole corpus of rabbinical study which followed it. Observance is self-fulfillment. Study is not aimed at revealing something new but at uncovering the eternal truths embedded in the *halakhah* (religious law).

The Orthodox are so obvious in demonstration, especially in Israel, that one is apt to forget that they are a small minority of the fourteen million Jews of the world. But even remembering this, one is impelled to give them special significance in the ongoing picture. Jewry as a whole is unlikely to return to the Orthodox camp, but there is nevertheless a sense of assurance that a metaphysical view of Judaism will survive through Orthodoxy to future generations. The rest of us—reformers, eclectics, or plain wafflers—might be rather lost without this rock around which experiment can turn. Of course the rock itself keeps splintering off, but the center holds because it provides a foundation which cannot be shaken by reason. As an individual, the Orthodox Jew must find a way of keeping his lines straight to God, and he is always aware also of the larger issue at stake—the need for devout Jews, even if few in number, to act in such a way as to keep the Covenant, as defined in the Bible and spelled out by the rabbis, still in being. There is a sense in which all the other Jews, looking on, must acknowledge that something important is being stated in this attitude, and something of this comes through in the view that even with so much changed, Judaism is still "basically" the same.

The second factor which is apt to lead to confusion is the emergence of Israel. Almost every writer on this subject presents the story of the Jewish state as illustrating the continuum of the present with the past, for nothing seems to flow more naturally from the Judaism of history. It was God who gave the Land to the Jews in the first place. They lost it through sin, as the rabbis explained, and have prayed to God for it ever since. The Return was God's fulfillment of His promise. In the Six-Day War of 1967, with the Temple wall back in Jewish hands, the most hardened skeptics saw the Bible vindicated.

The holiness of Zion for a Jew is a dominant theme in *A History of Judaism*. But what does the word "holy" mean in this context? The great majority of Jews in Israel today seem to have no active concern with the supernatural. If they have a religion, it is humanism. The holiness of Zion has become for them a metaphor—pride in their unique achievement, faith in their will to survive. It is a totally different conception from that of the Orthodox Jew, for whom "holiness" is an expression of God's will that every inch of this sacred soil be a witness to Jewish observance of the Torah. In the non-Jewish ambience of the Diaspora, Jewish consciousness is inevitably a compromise. In Israel, the issue of secular versus sacred is carried by respective partisans to logical conclusions, and as a result, Israel dramatizes not a continuum but a break with the past.

The third element which exaggerates the continuity of the Judaism of history relates to a phenomenon seen most clearly in the United States—the burgeoning appeal of Conservative Judaism. *A History of Judaism* explains briefly, but pointedly, how this tradition-oriented attitude to Jewish worship grew, especially after both world wars, to the surprise of everyone, since the trend had seemed set so firmly toward the laissez-faire approach of Reform. Here again is continuity, but based this time not on a rock but on what sometimes has the air of a conjuring trick—now you see it, now you don't. Bernard Martin, author of Volume II of *A History of Judaism*, is appropriately ironic:

> Perhaps it is not unfair to say that a major factor in this success was precisely the fact that the Conservative movement did not define its theological platform with any precision. While its practice made it plain that it did not

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acknowledge the revelatory character of the Torah or accept its unqualified authority, Conservatism continued to profess its general loyalty to tradition.

For a Jew wedded frankly to pragmatism there is nothing wrong with this attitude except in one respect: how does it sustain itself for the future? The problem for Conservative rabbis is that they have all been trained to a deep understanding of Orthodox Judaism. More than any of their congregants they know that no amount of ingenious paraphrasing can cover the gap between the literal assertions of the ancient faith and the new sentimental versions. One guesses that for most of them the past still has genuine authority, but softening it up may deprive it of any power of reproduction.

A FOURTH (and final) factor often encourages a feeling that faith is still strong among us in ancient ways. We have seen in the last decades an immense proliferation of books on all aspects of Jewish history and experience, and one might slip into regarding this phenomenon as an endorsement of—an identification with—the Judaism of history. The fact that many of the authors of the new cornucopia of Jewish books are also fully at home in the rabbinic world obscures what is a fundamental difference: by and large they examine Jewish history not to find out what God intended, but to see what the Jews themselves made of it—a rather significant change of stance.

One can see this at work in two scholars of different personality, Professor Jacob Neusner of Brown University and Rabbi Louis Jacobs of London. Neusner, the author of long studies of the ancient rabbis and their socio-legal preoccupations, is concerned with his subject from the standpoint of the student of religion generally. In his view one has to get *outside* Judaism to understand it. One must see it historically, in context. "One's personal emotional condition," he says, "can play no role of consequence in the study of a religion which few in the West have held in its classical form for at least a century." So Judaism for him is ultimately a factor of the study of society. Jacobs, at the other end of the spectrum but equally expressive of a new approach, seems to have been driven to theological study entirely by his "personal emotional condition." By taste, he would like everything distinctive in ancient Judaism to persist—*halakhah*, observance, dogma. With profound scholarship he expounds it all, from the *inside*, as an exercise of love. The trouble is that his native reason—which is, for him, his true conscience—balks at accepting some basic assumptions, with the result that from the standpoint of the Judaism of history he is a heretic, without wanting to be. In his best book, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, he spends 85 pages expounding the rabbinic view that the Oral Law is literally implicit in the Torah which was revealed by God to Moses, word for word. Having expounded it all brilliantly, he then shows why it is unacceptable to him.

To take another example, for the purpose of contrast, what could be more startlingly new, though linked to some very ancient Jewish ideas, than the apocalyptic transfiguration which Arthur A. Cohen has sought to introduce into Jewish self-understanding both in his theological writings (especially *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew*) and in his novel, *In the Days of Simon Stern*? Jewish history has no meaning for Cohen unless a Jew takes on consciously an acknowledgment of the supernatural role that God has given him, a far cry from the preoccupation with this world that is, for others, the hallmark of the Jewish approach.

It seems out of key even with the revival of Jewish mysticism in the hands of Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. Scholem is a historian; Buber was a poet. Both of them turned to medieval Jewish history (and Buber also to the Bible) for an enlargement of their vision of life, but not through *belief* in the ancient categories of thought. With Scholem, the work has been a search for historic truth. In his fabulous scholarship he has documented a world of strange beliefs and practices, and shown how that world took shape historically in religious and social upheavals and transformations. He has made mysticism exciting as well as respectable. But though he describes it all with intense sympathy, he does so without personal involvement. He is a 20th-century Jew, fusing his loyalties with the highest standards of "German" scholarship: on top of his subject, not submerged by it.

For Buber, abstraction from personal dependence on the past has come the opposite way. As Scholem himself pointed out in a famous essay originally published in these pages,* Buber had no interest in the true historical background—the writings and secret magical practices of the kabbalists—out of which his beloved hasidim emerged, but was content to explore the only aspect which appealed to him, the beauty of legend, as adapted to the purpose of an existentialist philosophy. By playing down the underlying faith of the hasidim in magic, the link with the past was broken. "To put it bluntly," Scholem said, with affection but also irony, "Buber was a religious anarchist."

ONE wishes sometimes that there was more spelling out of religious viewpoints in this way by scholars who have been bringing a new type of understanding to the historical framework and might therefore be free to give Jewishness a valid definition for our time. It doesn't seem enough any more to rely on pietistic summations of the type given, say, by Franz Rosenzweig:

> It is something inside the individual that makes him a Jew, something infinitesimally small yet immeasurably large, his most impenetrable secret, yet evident in every gesture and every word. The Jewishness I mean is no "literature." It can be grasped through neither the writing nor the reading of books . . . . It is only lived—and perhaps not even that. One *is* it.

There are, of course, definitions that take one further. One can respond to them all, when the language is of our time, depending on

* "Martin Buber's Hasidism," COMMENTARY, October 1961, reprinted in Scholem's *The Messianic Idea in Judaism.*

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one's mood. Consider two widely different approaches, as propounded respectively by J. L. Talmon and the late Abraham Joshua Heschel.

To Talmon,* the meaning of being Jewish has to be sought by the rational analysis of history in general. The Jewish ethos—modes of feeling and behavior—may be too difficult to pin down except by the art of the novelist, but one can see how one element in the Jewish tradition, the idea of a whole people's recognizing God as their sovereign, has been at the heart of the Western concept of state law, and therefore of Western civilization. With Talmon, the most perceptive of historical commentators, one stays in the realm of political ideas.

By contrast, one moves with Heschel into the realm of the moral imperative. Shortly before his death in December 1972, he described in the introduction to a new book† two forces in the tradition which "carried on a struggle" within him, personified in two numinous figures—the Baal Shem, the founder of Hasidism, and Rabbi Menahem Mendl of Kotzk ("the Kotzker"). In the Baal Shem he found love and compassion, in the Kotzker a struggle for intellectual integrity which brought perplexity and contradiction. The Baal Shem was a lamp; the Kotzker was lightning. The truth lay in both. Integrity without love leads to ruin: fervor alone "may seduce us into living in a fool's paradise." This is less the language of a traditional rabbi than of John Donne in St. Paul's Cathedral, but one listens to it.

One is in fact all along following the advice of Hillel, whose pungent answer to the heathen inquirer was a little longer than the brief dictum usually quoted. Having summed up the Torah as, "What is hateful to you, do not unto your neighbor," Hillel went on: "That is the whole truth: the rest is commentary. *Zil g'mor*—Go and study it." Perhaps this is what being Jewish should mean: follow the story wherever it leads.

* "Uniqueness and Universality of Jewish History," COMMENTARY, July 1957.

† *Kotzker—A Struggle in Integrity* (Schocken).

Fiction

Naipaul's Guerrillas and Oates's Assassins

Hilton Kramer

ONE does not have to read very far in V. S. Naipaul's new novel*—the first short chapter will do—to experience that peculiar sensation, a mixture of confidence, anxiety, anticipation, empathy, pleasure, and suspense, that every confirmed reader of fiction recognizes and yearns for (often, alas, to little avail nowadays) as the special satisfaction to be derived from this branch of literature above all others. From the moment that the novel's dubious hero and his even more dubious mistress arrive at Thrushcross Grange, a woebegone agricultural commune on a politically troubled Caribbean island, we see straightaway that Naipaul is the real thing—a novelist who creates a world, who conjures up compelling characters and commands our assent in their complex fate. Thrushcross Grange, everywhere advertised by the slogan, *For the Land and the Revolution*—"The signs were all new. The local bottlers of Coca-Cola had put one up; so had Amal (the American bauxite company), a number of airlines, and many stores in the city"—is presided over by a putative Muslim "leader," the refugee of rape and assault charges in London, who lives in comfort on the handouts of the local business community while his teenage followers languish in squalor and despair. In the exchanges of this opening chapter, the first dishonesties are revealed, the first fears made palpable and irreversible, the first glimpses given of the fantasies used to disguise the grim reality, and from them, with a unity of action and design we scarcely any longer expect in a work of fiction, the terrible denouement follows in the final chapter that restores the same few characters to the same barren ground.

It is another mark of Naipaul's novelistic gift that we are not tempted, for the duration of our reading, to linger over the niceties of his style, admirable as we sooner or later acknowledge that style to be, for his is a prose—economical without being elliptical, pictorial without being decorative—placed so swiftly and so completely at the service of his characters and his story that it would seem frivolous, should we think of it, to detach our attention from the progress of the action to the mechanics of its realization. It is not primarily of art that his accomplished artistry induces an intense consciousness, but of life—for Naipaul's fiction has the classic centrifugal power of carrying us beyond the boundaries of its vividly rendered microcosmic events to that larger terrain in which we, too, feel implicated and portrayed.

Guerrillas is a short novel, almost too compact for the breadth of experience it embraces, yet it holds us in its grip with a tale at once so tragic and so far-reaching that it has the effect of expanding in the mind to a size far greater than the swiftly paced action it recounts. The scene is that now familiar island of the mind, based on the historical Trinidad that shaped the author's early life, which Naipaul has succeeded in making as much a part of the permanent geography of fiction as Dickens's London or Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. The time is the present, when the illusionist ideologies of Third World "independence,"

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* *Guerrillas*, Knopf, 248 pp., $7.95.

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masking a primitive struggle for power and preferment, hold the island in a volatile state of political incoherence. The colonial power has departed, leaving behind a political vacuum that is also, for local demagogues, liberal idealists, economic adventurers, and the demoralized populace, a complete moral void. The new order, in a half-conscious parody of the old, has quickly established its fragile simulacrum of a social hierarchy. A charade of old manners, no longer anchored to the old stability that gave them meaning, coexists with symbols of new authority, itself a chimera compounded of false sentiment and naked force. We are adrift in a half-world where nothing is quite real except the atavisms that paralyze the energies of social reconstruction and nullify the value of individual action.

Into this lost tropical "paradise," now a wasteland of political intrigue and economic stagnation, comes Peter Roche, an English liberal fresh from the celebrity of his ordeal in South Africa. There, as a white participant in the black resistance movement, he had been a famous victim of police torture and, as a consequence, has become something of a Third World hero. Roche has written—out of no special conviction about its importance, we soon realize—a book about his South African experience. He does not really regard himself as a hero. About the extravagant virtue attributed to him, he is publicly diffident and privately ironical, if not actually queasy, yet he readily accepts the kind of homage that is paid to such heroes in liberal London. One of the dividends of this homage is an affair with the woman who is assigned to do the publicity for his book. Another is the public-relations job that comes to Roche, on the strength of his Third World celebrity, working for an island trading company originally founded on the slave trade and now uneasy about its future in the island's new racial scenario. Soon after he takes up this job as political arbiter for a company of dubious reputation, the woman from London comes to live with Roche as his mistress in the house on the Ridge, an enclave reserved for the privileged but now precarious survivors of the old regime and the privileged managers of the new.

Naipaul's portrait of this woman, Jane, is one of his most terrifying creations, and not because there is anything especially grotesque or unusual in her character, but precisely because she is in so many essentials a familiar figure—indeed, a fixture—of the liberal culture we all know. With her "casual nihilism" and her glib phrases "about the coming crash and the disintegration of systems," her easy espousal of apocalyptic ideas dimly understood, confidently asserted, yet never in any degree seriously attached to a sense of her own destiny, she is the perfect incarnation of a mode of smart, mindless political promiscuity that Naipaul, with a breathtaking indifference to the pieties that now deny such connections, does not hesitate to equate with her reptilian appetite for sexual conquest. In mind and body alike, she is without conscience or commitment, a moral cipher, capable of making a striking, if superficial, impression in her protected London world, where her facile comments "suggested knowledge, alertness, a degree of political concern," but now, in the harsher political climate of the island, where there is no longer any room for error, she is quickly revealed as a sinister, destructive force.

From Roche, whom Jane sees at first as an exemplary "doer" in a world where others only talk and make excuses, completely missing the more delicate shades of his own self-irony and self-doubt, she has acquired the tag ends of the ideology he acts upon and publicly represents without wholly believing in. When we first meet her, we see her through her lover's now detached and disaffected vision: "The sea anemone, he thought, waving its strands at the bottom of the ocean. Rooted and secure, and indifferent to what it attracted." About a casual remark that she makes, dismissing as "half dead" the England she has temporarily abandoned and to which she expects sooner or later to return in perfect safety, Naipaul writes: "It was what [Roche] had taught her, what she had picked up from him and incorporated, as words, as a passing attitude, into the chaos of words and attitudes she possessed: words that she might shed at any time, as easily as she had picked them up, and forget she had ever spoken them." In the disaster that Jane brings on herself, culminating in her sexual violation and brutal murder at the hands of the half-breed black-power leader, Jimmy Ahmed, whom she has casually flattered and seduced without ever taking seriously as a man or a mind, Naipaul gives us a haunting symbol of the world we too inhabit, for the real "guerrillas" of his fable are not the unseen forces hiding in the bush but those bemused ideological adventurers, like Jane and Roche and Jimmy Ahmed himself, conducting their ruinous raids from the illusory sanctuary of ideas that bear no real relation to the actualities they confront.

In the figure of Jimmy Ahmed, too, Naipaul flouts all liberal pieties. Although Ahmed is portrayed with a subtle and persuasive sympathy, Naipaul is nonetheless merciless in showing us that everything about the man, including his manhood and even his name, is phony and confused, an image fabricated in the ideological empyrean of London radicalism and its media allies. This is the source of Roche's fame too, of course, but in Jimmy Ahmed's case, the consequences prove more dire. When catastrophe comes and his communal movement is unmasked as a political fraud—the movement that Roche's company is, on his advice, subsidizing, largely on the basis of a reputation earned in faraway London, but that lacks in reality the least shred of native support—Jimmy Ahmed does not have access to the kind of safe exit still readily available to a white outsider like Roche. Ahmed the "leader" is the casualty of a political fiction, just as Ahmed the man is a sexual casualty, secretly acknowledging that he has left his manhood in England with his white English wife and meanwhile nursing his broken spirit with the sexual favors of the ugliest of the boys at Thrushcross Grange, whom Ahmed has made his whore. Nothing is more audacious in Nai-

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paul's novel—and nothing more persuasive—than its sexual-political equations, which clearly identify Ahmed's sexual behavior, no less than Jane's, as a correlative of political frivolity and nihilism. Nothing is more curious, either, than the way Naipaul has been able to get away with these sexual-political equations, suffering (so far as I know) no stigma or attack for such a thoroughly "conservative" view of both human nature and the radical enterprise. It is almost enough to make one believe that literature —at this level, at least—is still taken seriously, though one cannot help wondering how a writer of similar gifts and similar beliefs, but one less favorably situated in relation to the Third World, would fare in the ideological jungles of the West. But this, come to think of it, is part of the ironic substance of *Guerrillas* too. Its author is a shrewd judge of what, as a native of the Third World himself, he can get away with, and in this book, at least, he goes the limit. *Guerrillas* stands in the great tradition of novels that anatomize the effect of ideology on the lives of those it has thoroughly "possessed" and destroyed. It can be placed beside Conrad and Turgenev without embarrassment, and amply confirms Naipaul's position as one of the most important of living writers.

JOYCE CAROL OATES is, like Naipaul, a steady worker in the literary vineyards, and she too addresses her work to what might be called topics of the day—in *The Assassins** we are given not only a political assassination, but something akin to a replay of the Attica prison riot and all manner of reference to current events and ideas—but there, emphatically, the resemblance ends. Miss Oates is actually closer in spirit to Naipaul's character Jane than to Naipaul himself.

Reading this ill-written book, which, in its irritating combination of thoughtless haste and inflated length, seems to have been influenced by the electric typewriter more than by any intelligible novelistic idea, I can fully appreciate for the first time why its author's copious production of novels, short stories, poems, critical essays, reviews, and sundry other effusions has become something of a scandal in the literary (or at least the publishing) world. Writers genuinely admired and enjoyed, writers whose works are actually *read*, are not, I think, very often admonished to write less. The suggestion so frequently conveyed, obliquely or otherwise, that Miss Oates writes too much speaks, I find, to a genuine grievance. For *The Assassins* is the sheerest rubbish. It is a torture to read, as there seems to be no mind in charge of its inchoate assemblage of characters and events, and beyond that, it is extremely repugnant in what it substitutes—with a perfect confidence in its literary efficacy—for the work of intelligence or imagination.

As rubbish, however, the book has an undeniable fascination. For Miss Oates's is a learned rubbish, an educated rubbish, the kind of rubbish that can be produced only by a writer who has immersed himself in the "lessons" of modern literature. These "lessons"—the accretion, no doubt, of a steady classroom examination of the modern classics—are distilled, in Miss Oates's novel, in a disabling sophistication that, for all its knowing reference to events in the world "out there," is only another mode of academicism. Alienation—that talisman of the academic modernist —is Miss Oates's abiding theme, as violence is her abiding solution to every problem of fictional dramaturgy. But alienation, in *The Assassins,* is something willed and imposed, an obligation dutifully met and mechanically negotiated. It serves a function very similar to that of the happy ending in the genteel fiction of the Howells period: it is what custom decrees and culture ennobles, and it bears no necessary relation to the experience of the characters who are its ostensible embodiments. In this respect, as in others, Miss Oates has a completely conventional mind, a mind tethered precisely to the conventions of popular anguish. This, I suppose, is the basis of whatever appeal she commands, for she obliges us to question nothing about received ideas or established assumptions, which she mimics and vulgarizes without in any way illuminating. It is a mercy, in a way, that she is so inept, for were she technically more adroit and even minimally readable, she would be more of a menace.

The story of *The Assassins* is the story of the Petrie family—Andrew, the charismatic politician, a New York State Senator on his way to becoming Governor, an egghead Huey Long in the making, a conservative theorist and gifted demagogue, who is the assassin's victim; his brothers, Hugh and Stephen, the one an artist and the other a religious nut, though no nuttier, really, than the other catatonic personalities who pass, in this novel, as sensitive barometers of the spiritual life of our time; and Yvonne, Andrew's widow, a woman we are invited to believe capable of serious intellectual effort but whose mind, interminably revealed to us in the disjunctive, telegraphic parody of the stream-of-consciousness that Miss Oates employs as her principal narrative mode, is vacant of the least trace of consecutive cerebration. What distinguishes these characters—or rather, Miss Oates's perception of them, for they have no independent existence—is an endemic paranoia, a madness that sees menace, betrayal, anger, and concealed violence in every face, gesture, and human exchange. Buried, and destroyed, in the novel is a modest family chronicle, on the model of a John O'Hara story, with its conflicts of affection and dominance, its dirty sexual secrets and social snobberies. But Miss Oates never allows that chronicle to emerge in any coherent form. She is, in a sense, "above" the demands of the family documentary. At home only in the paranoid scenarios of the disembodied mind, she is able to attach her characters to the social fabric only at the point where violence, physical or psychological, relieves her of the obligation to illuminate their real life in the world.

There is a particularly ugly scene in *The Assassins*—a scene in which Yvonne is first shot and then dismembered with an axe. The act is arbitrary and meaningless, without

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significant connection with anything that has preceded it or anything that follows, yet Miss Oates dwells on its physical details as if it were crucial to her story, which it is not. I thought at that moment of Naipaul's extraordinary delicacy—for it can, I think, be so described—in the handling of Jane's horrific death in *Guerrillas*. The scene in which Jimmy Ahmed's wretched lover, tormented with jealousy and rage, butchers this woman with his rusty saber while Ahmed holds her fast, is never really described to us in all its gory detail. We are made to feel it, and we do feel it, profoundly, but we are not made to see it. Naipaul is too serious to titillate us with the details of an obscene action, and he has no need to. The entire novel comes to climax in that dreadful action, and we feel the weight of everything he has invested in this terrible moment. In *The Assassins*, we are uninvolved in anything but the perversities of literary taste.

Music

The Ragtime Revival

Bruce Kovner

THE renewed interest in ragtime, the American popular music of the first two decades of this century, among serious (or "classical") musicians, is one of the most curious cases of changing musical taste in recent years. The revival began in 1970, when a recording of eight piano rags of Scott Joplin, the most important of the ragtime composers, appeared on the Nonesuch classical label.* The record, which soon became a best-seller, was the idea of Joshua Rifkin, then a twenty-six-year-old pianist with degrees in composition from the Juilliard School of Music and in musicology from Princeton University. Rifkin was not rediscovering forgotten or previously unrecorded material, for ragtime had remained popular with jazz and Dixieland audiences. But he played the music differently from the "flashy school of ragtime," as he called it. Jazz musicians had altered the steady beat of the music, adding syncopations and in the process destroying the contrasts which highlighted the melodies; Dixieland musicians had done the pieces very fast, damaging their lyrical qualities. Rifkin, however, played the music exactly as written and observed the admonition, often printed on ragtime music, that "It is never right to play 'Ragtime' fast." What emerged was a subtle and delicate music, with graceful melodies and compelling rhythms, which captivated a large new audience.

The next major step in the revival was the publication of Joplin's complete works by the New York Public Library. With these now so easily available, ragtime recordings—on classical labels and featuring classically-trained musicians—inundated the market in versions not only for the piano, for which the music was originally written, but also for harpsichord, Moog synthesizer, violin, and band.† And along with the recordings flowed a stream of books and articles, some scholarly, some popular, but all making large claims for the artistic importance of ragtime.

No one knows where the term "ragtime" came from. It may be derived from the "ragged" melodic outlines of the music, or it could be a corruption of "jig-time," or perhaps it came from the custom among blacks of putting out a white flag, which was called a rag, to announce that a party with music and dancing was about to begin. In any case, the style was created during the last years of the 19th century by itinerant black musicians of the Midwest out of a mixture of previously disparate elements. From the minstrel song, they took the melodic style characteristic of banjo accompaniment; from the march, they took the bass figures and rhythms; from the cakewalk—a black dance that became a popular fad in the 1890's—they took a mock-serious combination of stately procession and energetic improvisation. By the turn of the century, the piano rag had developed into a highly stylized form, usually consisting of four themes, repeated one after another, with a reprise of the first theme after the second. Its characteristic sound came from a combination of syncopation and steady beat: the left hand played a relentless bass pattern (what jazz musicians call a "boom-chick bass"), while the right hand played a syncopated melody, that is, one which started or ended off the beat.

ALTHOUGH in its own time this music was very successful with a large public, its present-day partisans seem to delight in emphasizing the difficulties that faced ragtime composers like Joplin and the other two leading composers of rags, James

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* Nonesuch H-71248.

† Among the noteworthy recordings are two more volumes of Joplin piano rags played by Rifkin (Nonesuch H-71264 and H-71305); a five-record set of Joplin's complete works for the piano, played by Dick Hyman on RCA CRL-5-1106; and a violin-piano adaptation by Itzhak Perlman and André Previn, on Angel S-37113, that communicates a spontaneity and humor rare among recent recordings.

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Scott and Joseph Lamb.* William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel, for example, in their book *The Art of Ragtime*,† devote much space to quoting the unsympathetic and sometimes intemperate reviews of ragtime that appeared in music journals of the day. There is some remarkably purple prose in those early reviews and, separated from us by sixty years, they make amusing reading:

> A wave of vulgar, filthy, suggestive music has inundated the land. Nothing but ragtime prevails, and the cakewalk with its obscene posturing, its lewd gestures . . . .
>
> [Ragtime] denotes a species of music almost invariably associated with particular dances of a lascivious or merely ridiculous kind. . . . The *Valse Lente* [a popular dance of the 19th century] might and doubtless did, drive people to conjugal infidelity, but ragtime, I verily believe, drives them to mania.

Rifkin too makes much of the opposition to ragtime, particularly to the problems Joplin encountered in trying to arrange production of his opera *Treemonisha*.** According to Rifkin, Joplin's will was broken when he could find neither publisher nor producer for the opera:

> The disaster of *Treemonisha* dealt a mortal blow to the composer's spirit. Changes in his personality had already begun to disturb his wife and friends. His quiet, level temperament became unpredictable, his behavior tense, suspicious, increasingly moody. His skill at the piano declined seriously. After the debacle, the pace of the disintegration increased, until Joplin had to be taken to Manhattan State Hospital in the fall of 1916. Even there, he continued to compose during occasional lucid moments, feverishly sketching and revising. But Joplin never recovered, and he died in the hospital on April 1, 1917.

Here Joplin is cast as a doomed prophet, a composer ahead of his time, denied recognition because of the philistine tastes of his publishers and the public, and because of his dedication to high principles. No mention is made of the fact that Joplin had for years been suffering from, and finally died of, syphilis, which characteristically produces the personality changes Rifkin describes, without the need of "mortal blows" from any other source.

PERHAPS one reason Joplin is so often cast in the role of neglected genius is that this idea fits conveniently with the current emphasis on the importance of racial discrimination, as well as the desire—itself an element in the revival of ragtime—to assert the worth of black culture. In his essay, "Scott Joplin: Black-American Classicist," Rudi Blesh calls Joplin an "all-but-forgotten black-American genius," and attributes this to snobbery and prejudice against black culture:

> Quickly, then, ragtime began to meet with fanatic opposition from an informal entente of the moralist prudes, the Europe-oriented culture snobs, and an Academy that felt suddenly challenged. . . . The real trouble with ragtime was not that it was no good but that it was too good, and it had, so to speak, been born out of wedlock, with at least part of its parentage black.

These interpretations not only conveniently ignore important elements of Joplin's life, but they also misrepresent the development of popular music in the 20th century. First, Joplin was a supremely successful composer, as successful for his time as any popular composer is today. Born in Texas in 1868, the son of former slaves, Joplin left home at fourteen to become an itinerant musician, wandering around Texas, Louisiana, and Missouri, up and down the Mississippi, playing piano on riverboat steamers, or in gambling halls and brothels, joining up with traveling shows and squeezing out a living from low wages and tips. But within months of the publication of "Maple Leaf Rag" in 1899, Joplin had become a rich and famous man, and he continued to earn substantial sums from his music until his death in 1917. Neither James Scott—who was also black and who worked as a sheet-music salesman for much of his life and later taught music and did arrangements for silent-film theaters—nor Joseph Lamb—who was white and who worked in his family's prosperous import business—made as much money out of his ragtime compositions as Joplin. But both did reasonably well.

As for the bad reviews that ragtime received, it should be noted that the academic defenders of serious music in that period attacked all the popular music of the day (just as they often do today). Besides, ragtime—to a much greater extent than the music of Tin Pan Alley composers such as Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern—received its share of highbrow reviews that were good and some that were even glowing. For example, in 1915, Hiram K. Moderwell, music critic for the *New Republic*, wrote of ragtime that

> it has carried the complexities of rhythmic subdivision of the measure to a point never before reached in the history of music. It has established subtle conflicting rhythms to a degree never before attempted in any popular music or folk-music and rarely enough in art music. . . . It has gone far beyond most other popular music in the freedom of inner voices (yes, I mean polyphony) and of harmonic modulation.

Far from showing the ragtime composer as a man ahead of his time, the facts of Joplin's life and career suggest a close relationship between composer and audience, and a direct link with the musical traditions of the time.

Second, it is a great exaggeration to suggest that Joplin was an "all-but-forgotten" composer until the recent revival. "Maple Leaf Rag" has never been out of print since it was first published. Performers, critics, and a substantial audience have played, written about, and listened to ragtime throughout the seventy-five-year period since the birth of the style. And finally, the relative decline of ragtime cannot be blamed on hostility to black culture, since

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* A selection of Scott's music is available, played by John Jensen on Genesis GS-1044; Lamb's rags are on a companion volume, Genesis GS-1045.

† Louisiana State University Press, 249 pp., $10.00.

** The opera recently had a Broadway performance, and a recording of it with the Broadway cast and the Houston Grand Opera, conducted by Gunther Schuller, has just become available in a two-record set on Deutsche Grammophon, 270783.

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it was another form of black music—jazz—that became the new rage when the original ragtime boom finally receded; and it was black performers and composers, like Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington, who pioneered and profited from the change.

This change, however, probably had more to do with the development of the popular-music market than with considerations of a strictly aesthetic character. Before 1900, sheet music was the only practicable way to distribute a composer's work, and popular songs and piano pieces were—at prices of two dollars a copy and more—out of reach of a mass market. Besides, a high level of musical culture was required to read and play sheet music. But in the last years of the 19th century, the popular market was transformed. The cost of sheet music dropped to a quarter or fifty cents, and mechanical means of reproduction—the piano roll, the Edison cylinder, the Gramophone—became readily available. The result was an unprecedented growth in the popular-music market. Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," the piece that inaugurated the ragtime craze, eventually sold more than a million copies in sheet music and, along with other ragtime hits, was widely recorded. The new market supported an enormous growth in music publishing and a newfound prosperity among composers. And just as it had raised up ragtime and enriched its composers and publishers, the market turned away from ragtime toward the end of World War I, when the mass audience began tiring of it and the new vogue of jazz began proving more salable.

THE attempt to assimilate ragtime into the romantic myth of the artist neglected and destroyed by a philistine society can be seen as part of an effort to remove ragtime from this world of popular music and recast it as "serious" or "classical" music. And indeed, we now have an extensive critical literature which treats Joplin, Scott, and Lamb as composers of art music comparable to (although presumably less accomplished than) the great European masters. Schafer and Riedel, for example, argue that the best ragtime composers "forged a large body of finished and self-consistent works of art" which deserve to be played with "the same love and care given to Bach, Chopin, or Bartok." Rudi Blesh, in his prolific proselytizing for the ragtime cause, finds composers in every period to compare with one or another ragtime composer: Joplin is "the towering Bach of ragtime"; Scott is "the Liszt to the Chopin of Joplin"; and Lamb is the composer of "Chopinesque" melodies. By 1975, Rory Guy, writing notes for a ragtime record, could conclude that "The recognition of ragtime as a legitimate classical form has at last been accorded."

The trouble with all this is that ragtime simply does not stand up "as a legitimate classical form." It is true that of all the forms of popular music, ragtime is the most amenable to "classical" treatment by performers. Unlike jazz and folk music, ragtime is not improvisatory. It is fully written out, with scores that can be studied and performed with no reliance on aural tradition. And unlike the work of the popular songwriters, ragtime is written for the solo piano—the preeminent classical instrument. Nevertheless, it is also true that the rag is a modest form, with a structure and technique that are simply elementary beside a Bach fugue or a Chopin sonata.

Nor do such bigger and more ambitious works as Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* bear out the larger claims for this music. Set on an Arkansas plantation in 1884, *Treemonisha* is the story of a black child of that name, who as a baby is found under a tree, raised by a kind but ignorant black couple, educated by a white woman, and destined to become a leader by virtue of her education. The opera tells how Treemonisha quarrels with three evil old (black) conjurers, is kidnapped by them, is saved, and finally brings enlightened leadership to the plantation.

One problem with *Treemonisha* is the libretto, which is clumsily constructed and written, even by the not very exacting literary standards of the genre. Joplin spends most of the first act lackadaisically explaining Treemonisha's strange arrival and upbringing, then has her kidnapped and rescued within little more than half an act, and then, anticlimactically, gives us half of the second act and all of the third act to watch a reunion with her family and her triumph over the evil old men. Joplin is also more interested in teaching lessons than in maintaining dramatic tensions. For example, one song, entitled "Wrong is Never Right: A Lecture," contains the following lyrics:

> Never treat your neighbors wrong,
> By making them feel blue,
> Remember that the whole day
> long,
> The Creator is watching you,
> Never do wrong for revenge,
> In the day or night,
> Wrong must not a right in-fringe,
> For wrong is never right.

and the chorus sings:

> Wrong is never right,
> That is very true,
> Wrong is never right,
> And wrong you should not do . . . .

But the real problem is with the music. Abandoning the ragtime idiom in all but a few sections, Joplin wrote *Treemonisha* in conventional rhythms and harmonies that owe more to Victorian parlor songs and Italian opera than to the folk sources that give his piano rags their authenticity and appeal. The result, with the exception of a few numbers that do employ the ragtime idiom (such as "Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn" and "A Real Slow Drag"), is derivative music without grace or energy.

ALTHOUGH musical and social pretensions are at the root of *Treemonisha*'s troubles, it is these very qualities that the new partisans of ragtime praise in arguing that *Treemonisha* was Joplin's greatest accomplishment as a composer. Schafer and Riedel argue that "*Treemonisha* is the first demonstrably great American opera," precisely because it uses conventional forms of Western opera like the overture, the aria, and the recitative, in combination with a native musical idiom. And Carmen Moore, in her introductory notes to the opera for the New York Public Library edition, likewise ignores the derivative aspects of the music to emphasize the opera's achievement and its rele-

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vance to American blacks of today:

> Time and the experiences of highly-educated black Americans including Scott Joplin have shown that the elimination of educational deficiencies was not the black man's panacea and that for education to be relevant an institution called racial prejudice would have to be brought down. But now as blacks begin to enter a new era of creative independence the message about education begins to sound valuable again. . . . There is little music in *Treemonisha* which is not thoroughly timeless, totally American in the sense in which Dvorak meant it, or black and beautiful in the sense that the most progressive young black minds could imagine.

It would not be difficult to find fault with either the social or musical analysis in such passages, but the real danger of these reinterpretations is that the best of ragtime will be lost in the effort to make the music into something that it is not. Ragtime's great achievement is in the modest pieces—the piano rags. Some are minor masterpieces, intricately carved, delicate works. Joplin turned out perhaps a dozen of these nearly perfect little works: "Maple Leaf Rag," "The Entertainer," "The Easy Life," "Cascades," "Solace," "Euphonic Sounds," "The New Rag," and "Magnetic Rag," to name a few. The best of James Scott and Joseph Lamb, although never reaching Joplin's standard, are also very good indeed—works like Scott's "Frog Legs," "Grace and Beauty," and "Climax Rags," or Lamb's "Sensation," "American Beauty," and "Patricia Rags."

The ragtime revival has performed a valuable service in making these pieces readily available again, often in fine performances. But it also threatens to weigh them down with too much seriousness, and rob them of their vitality. Ragtime music came from saloons and cat-houses and it was meant to entertain. The music falls apart if played too slowly or with too much introspection. If ragtime's friends go on burdening it with an unnecessary load of musical pretension and political meaning, they may end by sinking this music into a deeper oblivion than the relative neglect from which the ragtime revival rescued it.

Movies

Kubrick and Peckinpah Revisited

William S. Pechter

I WENT to Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* with less than great expectations: Kubrick's last film was *A Clockwork Orange*, which I detested, and the fact that this one's cast was headed by a soap-opera graduate and an ex-fashion model seemed a bad-news bonus. But then, for the first hour or so of *Barry Lyndon*'s three hours and four minutes, it gradually drifted back to me that Kubrick was also the director of several earlier films, especially *The Killing*, which still seem to me admirable. This isn't to say there's anything in the leisurely snail's pace of *Barry Lyndon* really to remind one of *The Killing* or of the unrelenting tension of *Paths of Glory*, but it does at least call to mind the dry, quietly understated irony of parts of *2001*. Partly because of their ironic elegance, the opening sections of *Barry Lyndon are* pleasurable, both in themselves and for the anticipatory pleasure one takes in their seeming promise of what's to come in the unfolding of this picaresque tale of an 18th-century rogue's adventures; even the blank look on Ryan O'Neal's face can be taken as an appropriate reflection of the blank page of the protagonist's character, a page on which experience will soon leave its mark. For, at this early stage, one still has some confident trust in where the film is going, little realizing that it's going nowhere and that, not only is this all there is, but, all too soon, there will be even less. By the time the film inches its way into its third hour, the blankness of Ryan O'Neal's expression seems to be less an indication of the callowness of the character he's playing than the bewildered look of a star who's entrusted his career into the hands of a maestro director in the blind hope that the director, at least, knows what he's up to.

What Kubrick is up to provides the fascination of *Barry Lyndon*, though one's fascination is less with the film itself than with its director's intentions, which occasionally seem to be running, as it were, on parallel tracks alongside it. But if *Barry Lyndon* can be said to have a fascination, it's one of those works which is fascinating without being really interesting—like *Last Year at Marienbad*, which it resembles both in its solipsistic self-enclosure and in its similarity to some elaborate and intricate toy: a sporadically lifelike but coldly mechanistic "clockwork orange."

And yet the chill exuded by *Barry Lyndon* seems to be deliberate. More than one critic has complained of the lack of warmth and humanity in Kubrick's film, but such complaints fail both to pinpoint the film's deficiencies and to acknowledge that there can be works of art which are cool (Buñuel's *El*), non-humanistic (Kubrick's own *2001*), and even heartlessly cruel (Hawks's *His Girl Friday*) and yet brilliantly successful. It is not so much warmth and humanity that are purposefully drained from the later sections of *Barry Lyndon* as it is *interest*, so that, by the time the film concludes, Kubrick has managed to take a form as steeped in richness of character as 19th-century picaresque and leave it with a cipher at its center. By the time *Barry Lyndon* is over, the "wickedness" of its protagonist has been seen to consist of little more than cheating at cards, marrying for money, and seeking status, his "sins" hardly different from, and quite as banal as, our own. There, amid the grand and sumptuous decors of his past, man acts out his petty and futile

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vanities, making small talk and phone calls home from stations in outer space, amid the technological marvels of *2001*.

WATCHING *Barry Lyndon's* portrait of the picaresque rogue as a domesticated, doting father, being buried ever deeper under a mountain of bills and ending up a disabled pensioner, I was reminded at moments of Max Ophuls's *Lola Montès* (by the director whom Kubrick has called his favorite), another revelation of the mundane underpinnings of a romanticized figure. (The comparison extends to the stolidity of the two films' leading players, though Ophuls was saddled with *his* star, Martine Carol, and his conception was, to some degree, probably dictated by her limitations. Yet while Kubrick may have chosen Ryan O'Neal partly to deceive his financial backers into believing they'd be getting a conventional costume spectacle, Kubrick seems to have got, in his star, exactly the qualities he wanted.) But the effect of the Ophuls film is generous and sympathetic: there's something extremely touching in its intimate view of the ordinariness of the woman on whom has been projected her age's romantic fantasies. The effect of the Kubrick film, on the other hand, is to reduce the figure of the picaresque hero to trivial insignificance: to keep everything sufficiently distanced (hence the shift from the novel's first-person narration to the ironic voice of a third-person narrator) to enable us to see its main character as someone who may try to scale society's ant hill but is, in actuality, just another ant. And the entomological view extends beyond the protagonist to his fellow creatures. Kubrick's films may never have been warm, but they did, once, plunge intensely into the thick of things. But while the effect of the depiction of the disastrous military advance in *Paths of Glory* was harrowingly to communicate the sense of our being a participant in the experience, the main battle sequence in *Barry Lyndon* is counterpointed by some scornful comment on the rabble with which military leaders achieve their glory and staged (despite some hand-held and point-of-view camerawork) to evoke the sense of a clash between armies of insects, incapable of seeing, as we do, the self-destructive idiocy with which they march to their annihilation.

WHAT KIND of person would make *Barry Lyndon*, then, and what would you call the man who made it? For one thing, he is quite unlike any other filmmaker today, and not just in being a director who's managed to establish for himself a position of unequaled independence (at least among English-language filmmakers). Living the life of a recluse in England, he works in Los Alamos-like secrecy, and when his films, spaced years apart, appear, they seem to have issued from some stateless, mid-Atlantic limbo, and to be uniquely devoid of national character. But they're not without character of another sort: their misanthropy clings to them like a frost. And in this, above all, lies their uniqueness, for while film is a medium which lends itself easily enough to the dehumanizing tendencies of an Eisenstein as well as to such things as the hateful, life-denying, idealistic rectitude of late Dreyer and even to the insistent sourness of a Mike Nichols, it's one which hasn't (perhaps because of the socially collective ways in which most films must be made) really numbered true misanthropes among its important practitioners. *Barry Lyndon* is distinguished from other films by several things, but chief among them is its depiction of the life of its protagonist (and of everyone else in the film) as one of virtually unrelieved unhappiness: from unrequited first love (of a woman who spurns him to marry for money); through years of bondage in the army; a rootless life as a gambler ("they had little to show for their labor but some fine clothes and a few trinkets," the narration informs us); his own loveless marriage for money; then years of mounting debts as he vainly seeks a title; the death of his beloved son (in a scene which jerks tears shamelessly and for which O'Neal's soap-opera training stands him in good stead); to his maiming (as a result of what may be his life's sole act of gallantry) in a duel with his stepson. What seems the one brief respite from all this misery is provided by an idyllic interlude when Barry, deserting from the army, spends a short time with a young Prussian farm wife, the picture of angelic innocence, whose husband is away at the wars, but even as she and Barry are tremulously saying farewell and tearfully pledging their love for each other, the image is shattered by the narrator dryly noting that Barry was hardly the first who'd "stormed and occupied" her heart and others would follow. Our last glimpse of Barry, now turned out of his estate by his stepson and provided with a stipend on condition he not return, is of a defeated figure limping off on crutches to spend his last years on his pension: the picaresque rogue as remittance man. Our last glimpse of the family he's left behind is of his wife and the stepson (rightful heir to the Lyndon estate by his mother's first marriage) as he passes her checks to sign; the son has taken Barry's place, but the mother, no less now than before, is valued chiefly for her signature. After which, an end title coldly states that it was many years ago that the "personages" we have just seen "lived and quarreled," and that "good or bad, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, they are all equal now."

Of course, one might observe that there's really nothing in *Barry Lyndon* that isn't implied by Kubrick's earlier work; *The Killing* and *Paths of Glory* are arguably just as misanthropic; but there's still, in those earlier films, at least an interest in their characters and in character generally which one senses gradually seeping from *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange* (with its message that human nature may be vile, but you'll get nowhere trying to improve it) until it vanishes altogether in *Barry Lyndon*. Great art can, of course, spring from misanthropy. But if the work of a Swift or Ben Jonson puts human nature under a microscope, Kubrick seems to be looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope. For four years he has labored on a film whose characters he seems to find unworthy not only of the least affection (with the possible ex-

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ceptions of a soldier who befriends Barry and is killed off early, and Barry's doomed innocent child) but even of the slightest interest. (Even their makeup seems to reflect Kubrick's indifference; for all the attention directed to the details of the film's decor, the characters' aging is indicated, with almost laughable unconvincingness, by slapping on a few gray wigs.)

This displacement at the core of Kubrick's films might be unmistakably plain were it not obscured by the legend of reclusive genius and by the distracting sheen of compulsive perfectionism lavished on the surface of his work. For with the waning of interest in the dramatic aspects of his films has come Kubrick's increasing preoccupation with their look and style, and now his painstaking devotion to their beauty. *Barry Lyndon is* beautiful, though in the absence of other things to engage one's attention, one grows acutely conscious of the overuse of such stylistic devices as the opening of sequences by a slow zoom out from a close view of a given detail, or of the incessant backlighting, and, especially, of the grating anachronism of the freeze frame used in the last shot of the film's protagonist. But, more importantly, the beauty of *Barry Lyndon* seems a kind of cul-de-sac: an anthology of beautiful views of beautiful scenery that seems hermetically sealed and cut off from the expressive power of such truly (and diversely) beautiful-looking films as *Breathless* or *French Cancan*, as well as from the kind of visual dynamism with which Lucien Ballard's camerawork invested Kubrick's own *The Killing*. There are some splendid images in *Barry Lyndon*, and the shots of candlelit interiors (made possible by the adaptation for the first time to motion pictures of an extremely fast still-camera lens) are, in particular, hauntingly memorable, leaving one feeling that, in such moments, Kubrick has photographed the past exactly as it must have been. Indeed, one comes away from the work as a whole feeling Kubrick has filmed not so much a narrative and characters as the 18th century itself: that every detail of the 18th-century backdrop has been realized with an unprecedented fidelity and brilliance. Watching *Barry Lyndon* is like sitting in a theater, with the curtain up on a magnificent stage set, and waiting for the actors to come. One watches, one waits, one admires the magnificence, for three hours and four minutes. But no one comes.

Sam Peckinpah has taken to describing himself as a "whore" in the past few years, thus preempting at least one bit of invective from his hostile critics. Unfortunately, saying it yourself doesn't make it any the less so. Four years ago, in a piece on Peckinpah and Kubrick,* I declared my belief that Peckinpah was the most exciting director at work in the American film today. Statements like that have a way of coming back to haunt you—in this case, long before Peckinpah's penultimate work, the compellingly awful *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*. But that film was a commercial failure; Peckinpah's latest film, *The Killer Elite*, is a hit, at least outside New York, and though its reviews have generally been as unfavorable as those of its predecessor, the new film has received some support from surprising quarters—most notably Pauline Kael in the *New Yorker*, where much is made of Peckinpah's failure (due to his artistry) to be, so to speak, a "good" whore—that is to say, obedient to his clients—and of his commitment to the value of survival. On the surface, there may seem to be some similarity between Peckinpah's methods of continuing to work (since I last wrote on them, he has made five films to Kubrick's one) and the adaptation to the system of, say, John Ford, with his admitted practice of making several films for "them" (i.e., the money men) in order to finance each one made for "himself." Yet with Ford, a popular artist in the best and most honorable sense, there was no real conflict between the values of his commercial and uncommercial films. But, at least in his use of violence, Peckinpah's best work goes against the grain of our popular movies, and for him to "go commercial" he has to betray the very vision which gives his best work its distinction. It's one thing to be a whore, though arguably, if you're going to be a whore, there's no merit in being a bad one. But it's another thing to give yourself over to total perversion.

I'd like nothing more at present than a new movie by Peckinpah at the top of his form, but there are few things I've seen on screen lately sadder than this new Peckinpah movie, pathetically trying to cash in on the current craze for the martial arts and mouthing its fashionable clichés of political disaffiliation (its CIA-subcontracted hero ends up, with what's left of his Mission-Impossible team of misfits, turning his back on all sides as not worth fighting for—and so the sons of the Wild Bunch sail off into the sunset, away from all causes). To be sure, the film has its striking moments—there's still no one who can put together a passage of film quite like Peckinpah—and even a fairly nicely sustained beginning. But it also has a writer (Stirling Silliphant, late of *The Towering Inferno*) who's a hopeless hack, a photographer (Philip Lathrop) almost incapable of being pushed beyond his habitual glossiness, and a star (James Caan) who seems increasingly unable to cut loose (as he once could) from the persona of buttoned-up jock; and finally, however well made, it remains junk. Perhaps survival as a filmmaker for Peckinpah means birthing deformities like *The Killer Elite*, but if so, survival in itself may be an overrated value. At least, with a *Barry Lyndon*, the deformations of the work truly reflect those of its creators' artistic personality. All one can see in the deformation of *The Killer Elite* is a reflection of the warping wrought when one commits oneself, above all else, to what Peckinpah sees as "survival."

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* "Peckinpah and Kubrick: Fire and Ice," Commentary, March 1972.

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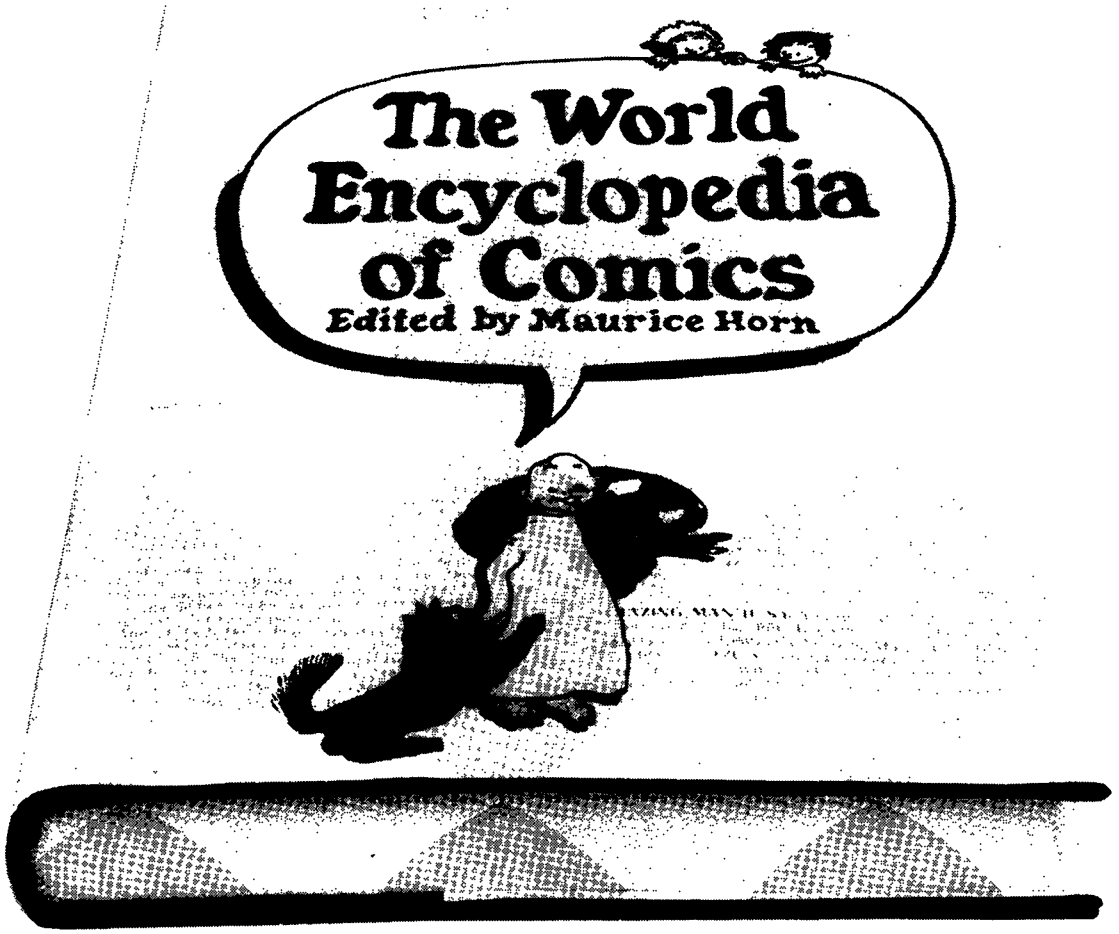

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Books in Review

A Poem We Need Today

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO TWO: THE DESTRUCTIVE-LABOR CAMPS; THE SOUL AND BARBED WIRE. By ALEKSANDR I. SOLZHENITSYN. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney. *Harper & Row. 712 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by LIONEL ABEL

WE HEAR what Solzhenitsyn says. But after all the cries, pleas, groans, pardons, commands, beatings, and pistol shots of *The Gulag Archipelago Two,* there is something additional to be heard, though this we shall have to listen for, or it may not come through clearly. Solzhenitsyn's carefully detailed reports on why such and such an inmate committed suicide, on how the women inmates suffered more than the men, and at what human cost (100,000 lives), and for what peculiar purpose (not industrial use), the White Sea-Baltic Canal was engineered, dug, and celebrated—these facts do more, I think, than document the lamentable story of what men have done to men under the Soviets. They also speak to the continuing violence out of the human past.

Solzhenitsyn accuses the Bolsheviks of having originated the terrible system of Destructive-Labor camps. This charge merges, as I read the *Gulag Archipelago* volumes, with charges made before by other men of spirit against other forms of oppression: in our own time, Gandhi against the British Raj; Malraux against the Kuomintang; Bernanos against Franco. If we did not understand it as the continuation of what is in fact a very old outcry, *The Gulag Archipelago Two* (*Gulag One* also) could be interpreted as a call for vengeance. After all, some 60 million persons, according to the available figures, had to endure ignominious and painful death at forced labor in the camps. Think of it! Some 60 millions! More than all the victims of this century's two most terrible wars. So a demand for vengeance would be humanly understandable.

Not, however, if one regards the sufferings of the *zeks* (inmates) as Solzhenitsyn does. For the author makes it clear from the outset of his text that he does not want it to be thought of as having a retaliatory aim; in this respect his rage is in direct contrast to the cry for vengeance voiced by Marxists (for oppressions, to be sure, not caused by them). Listen to the literary critic Walter Benjamin on this topic:

> The repository of historical knowledge is the oppressed . . . class itself. In Marx's work, this class appears as the last of the enslaved classes, as a vengeant class, bringing to an end the work of emancipation in the name of generations of slain human beings. This awareness has always been objectionable to democratic socialists. Within the span of three decades, social democracy succeeded in wiping out the memory of a Blanqui whose iron rhetoric shook up the last century. This same social democracy wanted nothing more dearly than to assign to the working class the role of redeemer of future generations. In so doing, it severed the sinew of the proletariat's greatest strength. Under the auspices of democratic socialism, the working class soon forgot what it is to hate and also to will self-sacrifice. Both hatred and the will to self-sacrifice are fueled by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than by the ideal of emancipated grandchildren.

What is significant about these words of Walter Benjamin, set down before the last great war in his now widely-quoted theses on history—I found them cited in the Fall 1975 issue of the Marxist magazine *Telos,* in an article by Christian Lehnhardt—is that the project of vengeance they support, and the kind of hate they justify, were no doubt at least in part responsible for the 60 million victims of the Destructive-Labor camps, victims Solzhenitsyn wants us to think about today, but whose fate he does not ask us to avenge. And that Blanqui of iron rhetoric, whom Benjamin accuses the social democrats of having made us forget, is the very same Blanqui whose words were a warrant for and augury of the ruthlessness of Lenin—on whom Solzhenitsyn fixes the main responsibility for the invention of the camps.

No doubt the Bolsheviks wanted to exact vengeance for the serfs. But as Solzhenitsyn sees the matter, the treatment of the *zeks* under Bolshevism has been more cruel and more senseless than anything the serfs endured under the Czars. The writer makes the comparison directly in his chapter, "What the Archipelago Stands On":

> The serfs did not work longer than from sunrise to sunset. The *zeks* started work in darkness and ended in darkness. . . . For the serfs Sundays were sacred; and twelve . . . Orthodox holidays as well, and local saints' days, and a certain number of the twelve days of Christmas (they went about in mummers' costumes). The prisoner was fearful on the eve of every Sunday. . . . And he never got holidays at all. . . . Those firsts of May and those sevenths of November involved more miseries with searches . . . than the holidays were worth (and a certain number were put into punishment blocks every year precisely on those very days). . . . The serfs lived in permanent huts, regarding them as their own, and when at night they lay down on top of their stoves or on their sleeping platforms . . . they knew: this is my own place, I have slept here forever and ever, and I always will. The prisoner did not know what barracks he would be in on the morrow. . . . The serfs were slaves, but they had full bellies. The Archipelago lived for decades in the grip of cruel famine. The *zeks* would scuffle over a herring tail from the garbage. . . .

LIONEL ABEL, *the critic and playwright, teaches English literature at SUNY, Buffalo.*

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Then should there be vengeance for the *zeks*? Real revenge, demanded in some iron rhetoric inspired perhaps by Solzhenitsyn's eloquence? As I indicated, this is not what the writer asks. In the political or legal sense, revenge? No. But in the intellectual sense, before the assizes of the mind, revenge? Yes. And we do not even have to call for it; miraculously, almost of its own volition, revenge is taking shape.

Consider these facts: at the close of 1949, David Rousset, former war prisoner of the Nazis at Buchenwald, author of *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, and founder with Jean-Paul Sartre of the radical left-wing grouping, the RDR, drew up a manifesto protesting the concentration-camp system in the Soviet Union. This protest he asked other French intellectuals to sign. Among those who refused to sign it were Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau Ponty. In a joint editorial for their review, *Les Temps Modernes*, they gave their reasons why.* They did concede that in fact there were such camps in Russia, and that one of every twenty Soviet citizens was at that time a camp prisoner. And they did call Soviet Communism "decadent." All the same, they argued against Rousset's manifesto. Why had he not protested in the same document against the imprisonment of dissidents in Greece and in Spain? (It was clear, though, that they themselves would have signed a protest against the prisons in Spain and in Greece which did not protest the camps in Russia.) Moreover, they argued that to sign this manifesto meant to side with American imperialism and to absolve the capitalist world.

The Sartre-Ponty statement ended on this note: "The truth is that even the experience of so absolute a horror as the concentration camps is not enough to determine a political position. The days of our life are not the days of our death." But this amounted to saying that the writers were not themselves camp prisoners, and so had other things to think about. For the camp inmate the days of his life often were indeed the days of his death, as we have learned from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who in 1950 was still a prisoner in one of the Soviet camps.† The refusal by Sartre, that man of many protests, to support Rousset's protest against the Soviet camps, has, I think, been fatal to the Frenchman's reputation as a political thinker. It earned him contemptuous dismissal as an advocate of "false freedom" and a defender of "brutality" by Nadezhda Mandelstam.

If signing Rousset's manifesto against the Destructive-Labor camp system while Stalin was still living meant giving aid to American imperialism, then what about the aid to American imperialism provided by the volumes of *Gulag Archipelago*, in which the camp system is described in its total horror and the guilt for its invention fastened not on Stalin, but on Lenin? And all this, long after Stalin's death and after Khrushchev's efforts at de-Stalinization. Surely the books should be denounced! Yet so far Sartre has not denounced them. According to press reports, before Sartre made his most recent trip to Eastern Europe, he asked Simone de Beauvoir to telephone Solzhenitsyn (who had by then been deported and was living in Switzerland) and arrange a meeting with him. One wonders: what could Sartre hope for from such an interview? Did he intend to ask forgiveness for not having protested against the camps in 1950? Did he intend to reproach Solzhenitsyn for having described the camps to Western readers? Or did he perhaps think that since the camps had been for the most part liquidated, it was finally permissible to protest against them? But we shall not have an answer to any of these questions until the day when Sartre himself decides to tell us what he had in view. Solzhenitsyn refused to see him.

* *"Les jours de notre vie"* ("The Days of Our Life"), *Les Temps Modernes*, January 1950.

† Arrested in 1946, he was not released until some eight years later, when Khrushchev began his de-Stalinization of Soviet life.

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For his part, Solzhenitsyn has avenged the *zeks* of Solovki on Maxim Gorki, who once visited the camp. How the *zeks* awaited the writer's coming! Solzhenitsyn describes their feelings:

> The falcon, the stormy petrel, was about to swoop down upon the nest of injustice, violence, and secrecy. The leading Russian writer! He will give them hell! He will show them! He, the father, will defend! They awaited Gorki . . . like a universal amnesty.

The chiefs, writes Solzhenitsyn, were alarmed, and did the best they could to hide the monstrosities and polish things up for show. Only somewhere there was an oversight. On Popov Island a ship was being loaded by prisoners in underwear and sacks, just at the moment when Gorki's train appeared. The writer would have to see them as he prepared to embark. Solzhenitsyn tells the story in his best style:

> You inventors and thinkers! Here is a worthy problem for you, given that, at the saying goes, every wise man has enough of the fool in him: a barren island, not one bush, no possible cover—and right there, at a distance of three hundred yards, Gorki's retinue has shown up. Your solution? Where can this disgraceful spectacle—these men dressed in sacks—be hidden? The entire journey of the great Humanist will be for naught if he sees them now. Well, of course he will try hard not to notice them, but help him! Drown them in the sea? They will wallow and flounder. Bury them in the earth? There is no time. No, only a worthy son of the Archipelago could find a way out of this one. The work assigner ordered: "Stop work! Close ranks! Still closer! Sit down on the ground! Sit still!" And a tarpaulin was thrown over them. "Anyone who moves will be shot!" And the former stevedore Maxim Gorki ascended the ship's ladder and admired the landscape for a full hour until sailing time—*and he didn't notice!*

There is more. Gorki had been to the children's colony. And after he had admired everything

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there he was told by a fourteen-year-old boy that all he had seen was false. Did the writer want to know what things were really like? Yes, said Gorki, and the boy told him in detail, not neglecting to describe the various kinds of torture in the camp. In the visitors' book Gorki wrote on leaving: ". . . I would be shamed to permit myself banal praise for the remarkable energy of people who, while remaining vigilant and tireless sentinels of the Revolution, are able, at the same time, to be remarkably bold creators of culture." Solzhenitsyn tells us that, hardly had Gorki's steamer pulled away from the pier than the boy was shot. Who, now, I wonder, will want to read even a line, let alone a story, a novel, a play by Maxim Gorki, that "remarkably bold creator of culture"?

For our part, we shall not neglect Walter Benjamin, whose theses on history, while not in any sense the cause of what occurred in Russia under Lenin or under Stalin, are nevertheless justifications of what happened there; they may also be used to justify oppression in East Germany, where Benjamin's texts have a particular relevance: he is one of the finest German critics of the century. But apart from the justice of visiting vengeance on someone who has extolled vengeance as just—apart from this, there is the matter of truth. Is Benjamin right in what he asserts? Is the proletariat truly the repository of past anger, anger for the past? There is no evidence that this is so. All we know of the proletariat indicates Benjamin's assertion to be false. Here we have an aestheticizing of the proletariat and its politics, and let us not forget, since we are talking about things remembered and who remembers them, that it was none other than Walter Benjamin who identified the aestheticizing of politics with fascism.

Who is it that remembers the tragic events of history? Surely it is the poets. Not without reason was it said that memory is the mother of the muses. It was Homer who remembered what happened to Troy, and Racine in *Andromache* remembered this because Homer had:

> Because he does not remember,
> does that mean I must forget?
> Should I forget my Hector,
> denied the right to burial
> Dragged like sticks over stones
> about the walls of Troy?

The poets have answered these questions for Andromache. I do not know that the proletariat has even considered them. No class has the special role of remembering unhappiness, not even the *zeks*, if they are a class. (Solzhenitsyn raises the question of whether they may not be a nation.) But in any case it is Solzhenitsyn who has taken upon himself the difficult, dangerous, and poetical task of remembering all that happened to the *zeks*, and I want to stress that these massive books on the Archipelago, which aim at truthful and accurate description of the Destructive-Labor camp system in Russia, constitute what is fundamentally a poetical work.

A poem? But certainly not a modernist poem. In calling the *Archipelago* books poetical, I am thinking of what Gogol had in mind when he called his *Taras Bulba* a poem. And Tolstoy must have had some such notion of poetry in view when he compared his prose work, *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, to Homer's epic. To be sure, the stress in the *Archipelago* books is on the facts, on the events, as they give themselves to the writer, and not as he takes them into his rhetoric. This work is, if you please, socialist realism, perhaps the only genuine writing we have in that style.

It is also, interestingly enough, a literature of commitment, the very kind of writing that Jean-Paul Sartre proposed to his generation as its special literary task; yet Sartre was neither able to produce this kind of writing himself, nor able to persuade others under his influence to do so. Why? Evidently the investigation of real facts and their accurate description would not in the West convey the political message Sartre wanted conveyed: it is urgent that there be a revolutionary overturn of this not-precisely-capitalist world. Would such an overturn result in a precisely socialist world? How could the doubts which many feel in this regard be resolved by a genuinely descriptive work, which, for the main points Sartre wanted made, would have to rely on some abstract hypothesis?

And there was another difficulty. In this century investigative writing has for the most part been pursued in prose, while poetry has opted for hiding things rather than for unveiling them. I am thinking here of T.S. Eliot's requirement that poetry make itself obscure, to which modern poetry has adhered with a strictness one is almost tempted to call fanatical. In this century there have been very few instances of what might be called *investigative poetry*. Probably the greatest example of such art in the 19th century was Balzac's *Human Comedy*, taken as a whole. The *Gulag Archipelago* books are poetry of this kind.

Writing About Jews

THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN AMERICAN LITERATURE: FROM EARLY REPUBLIC TO MASS IMMIGRATION. By LOUIS HARAP. *Jewish Publication Society. 586 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by ELINOR GRUMET

THE study of literary stereotypes is an easily abused form. Seeking to isolate condemnable attitudes toward a minority group wherever such attitudes may be found, the sociologist of literature tends to become indiscriminate in what he studies—treating folklore, mass culture, and serious literary work alike—and to assign equal weight to expressions of wildly unequal import. These dangers become magnified when the study of stereotypes is undertaken for overtly polemical reasons by those who have been wounded by them; when the purpose becomes to expose prejudice for the sake of vindication.

The Jewish use of literary surveys to vindicate wrongs—at least, to "set the record straight"—is by now an exhausted, though not

ELINOR GRUMET *is writing a literary history of American Jewry in the 20's for her Ph.D. at the University of Iowa.*

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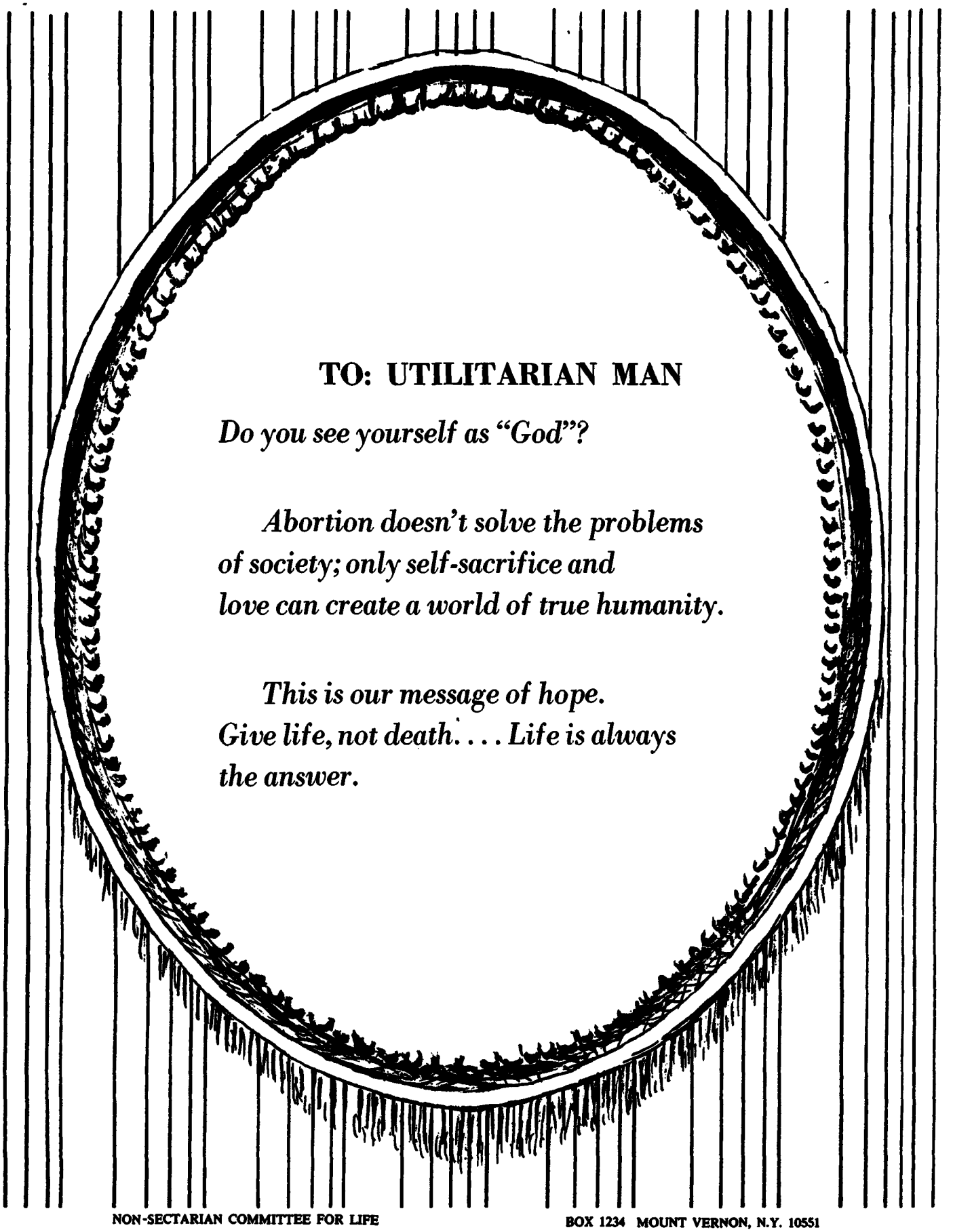

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very venerable, tradition. In this country interest in the genre began in the 1880's with the start of mass immigration from Eastern Europe, when the German Jewish community had become sufficiently established to be indignant at the negative stereotypes of Jews found in literature, while simultaneously threatened by the fact that unwashed multitudes of their co-religionists were newly arriving on these shores. In *The Jew in English Fiction* (1889) Reform Rabbi David Philipson asked: "Because there are some vulgar, uncultured people among the Jews, is this a reason that such are to be specially represented as Jews? Because some Jews have grown suddenly rich, and are loudly ostentatious, is this a cause that the flagrant injustice be done, that they, with these characteristics, be held up by the name of their religion?"

From the beginning most of this critical literature, meant to protect group interest, has been obsessed with the relationship between the fictitious and the real. Louis Harap's compendium, *The Image of the Jew in American Literature*, is the latest contribution to this literature; it is also a compendium of all the varieties of willful reading, contentiousness, and ways of mistaking the belabored and the obvious for revelation that such a partisan use of criticism is prone to.

The sad thing is that this book could have been important. Obviously it represents several years' labor. Consider its scope: Harap claims inclusivity from George Washington's welcoming letter to the congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, to Abraham Cahan's 1917 novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky*—the vital period of Jewish adjustment to America and of America's adjustment to Jews. The recurrent images of the Jew in popular fiction are here catalogued recurrently: the crafty Jew who sets his business on fire for the insurance money; the Jew with wonderful glittering eyes; the Jew who lives in Oriental splendor behind his shabby ghetto façade. And beside this we are offered not only Emily Dickinson's line about an orchard at dawn that "sparkled like a Jew," but the image of Mark Twain's being swamped by his immigrant audience at a performance of *The Prince and the Pauper* at the Educational Alliance. Equally chronicled are the patriotic novel written in 1858 which depicts Haym Salomon speaking in dialect; H. Pereira Mendes's *Looking Ahead*—a fictional attempt to combine Bellamy and Zionism; and Harold Frederic's perceptive eyewitness account of the pogroms in Russia published in the New York *Times*. We are told that in the 1880's James Russell Lowell was looking for Jews under his bed, while Henry Harland, enthralled with Ethical Culture, was publishing novels about Jews under a "Jewish" pseudonym—and selling.

The documentation, then, is thick, but Harap is unable to analyze or interpret the evidence he has amassed. For one thing, he is oblivious to the need to distinguish among serious novels, adventure stories, vaudeville acts, essays, journal entries, and private correspondence. And, for another, he confounds malicious intent with mere habit or the desire to pander to mass taste. Thus a single remark in Hawthorne's English notebooks on the "repugnance" he felt toward Jews is read into the entire corpus of his work; Harap concludes that by implicating Miriam in *The Marble Faun* in sin, and casting her vaguely in the image of the Wandering Jew—"the product of centuries of hostility toward Jews"—Hawthorne was unconsciously showing his true, reprehensible feelings. Loyal to the myth that all major American writers at the turn of the century were virulently anti-Semitic, Harap similarly takes Henry James to task for, among other things, not stating his pro-Dreyfus convictions for the public record. And so it goes.

A measure of Harap's failure is his inability to incorporate the best critical work already done in the field. Rudolf Glanz, for example, has written extensively and solidly on the Jew in American folklore, including an essay published fourteen years ago on the Wandering Jew that is much more to the

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point than the chapter in Harap's book. Yet nowhere does Harap draw on Glanz's insights or the information from newspapers and popular sources that Glanz has unearthed. Then there is Edgar Rosenberg's *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction*, a book so clear and penetrating that one would have thought it would set the standard for all subsequent work on Jewish "images." Yet Harap dismisses it in a single page. Harap also seems overanxious to take issue with Leslie Fiedler, whose pamphlet, *The Jew in the American Novel*, has a suggestive treatment of some of the material in Harap's purview.

Harap, in sum, identifies literature with historical fact and disallows any complexity to individual feeling that might fall outside the prejudices established by mass sentiment. Rightly approached, he implies, *The Golden Bowl* is no different from a dime novel: the author's feelings about Jews, which in turn reflect the *Zeitgeist*, may be determined without reference to a qualifying literary or dramatic context. This is a Jewish version of the Marxist view of literature. Indeed, in his first book, *Social Roots of the Arts*, Harap wrote that the function of the critic is "to dispel . . . obscurity by exposing the class [now read "anti-Semitic"] expression of the artist, the social origin, and determination of his work and its function in society." In the end no one, not literature, not the Jews, is served by this sort of thinking.

Among the Young

THE AGE OF SENSATION. By HERBERT HENDIN. *Norton. 354 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by STANLEY ROTHMAN *and* PHILLIP ISENBERG

"ALIENATION," as a term to describe the situation of American youth, first came into its

STANLEY ROTHMAN *is professor of government at Smith College;* PHILLIP ISENBERG *is a psychiatrist at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts.*

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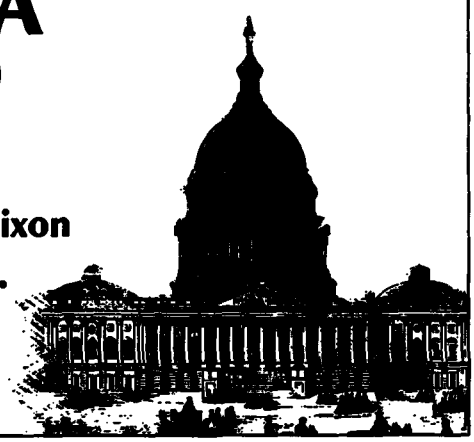

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own in the early 60's, through the work of such social critics as Paul Goodman and Kenneth Keniston. From somewhat different perspectives, both Goodman and Keniston agreed that an increasing number of the most intelligent young Americans were profoundly alienated both from themselves and from American society, because of basic faults in that society. Both critics were rather pessimistic about the future of these young people, with Keniston predicting that the majority of them were so caught up in the toils of the culture that they would go through life as automatons—in some pain perhaps but fundamentally unaware of the possibilities for "self-realization" that they were missing.

Then came the student upheavals of the middle and late 60's, beginning with Berkeley, which caught these critics unprepared. Keniston now shifted focus somewhat, arguing that America was indeed a sick society, but that a sizable segment of our best youth, growing up, by their own testimony, in unusually enlightened, warm, and democratic homes, were aware of this and were working for a better country and a better world. Indeed, Keniston's young, committed radicals were almost without blemish.

Now in the mid-70's, with the campuses quiet, the alienation theory is back among us. According to Herbert Hendin, American youth is suffering from this condition to a degree that verges on the pathological. Hostile to the surrounding society and to each other, the young live a numbed, desperate existence, struggling to control the anger which threatens to overwhelm them. Almost all the young people Hendin describes are caught in the same bind. They claim to hate the competitiveness forced on them by society and the aggression it entails, but at the same time they have little capacity for tenderness toward each other. Relations between the sexes, for instance, have become a kind of war in which each partner attempts to "rip off" the other. Whether radical or apolitical, a dropout, a drug addict, or a would-be suicide, Hendin's typical student responds with varying degrees of ineffectiveness to internal problems which he cannot resolve.

In compiling his data Hendin has drawn on general cultural evidence—in particular the novels of Joseph Heller and Thomas Pynchon—as well as on his work with drug addicts, university students who came to him seeking therapy, and a special group of one hundred Columbia undergraduates chosen at random as voluntary subjects for interviews. Of these three groups the third is most important, for it is on the basis of his findings with these particular students that Hendin makes his broader generalizations about American youth today.

How deeply did Hendin probe in coming to his dire conclusions? Most clinicians would argue that by their very nature, interviews with respondents who have volunteered for a study yield only limited insight. Such interviews can provide a picture of some of the major conflicts confronting an individual, but any real understanding of these conflicts, and especially of their underlying dynamics, simply takes more time than this kind of interviewing allows. Ultimately, such understanding can probably only be derived from, and confirmed by, subjects who are actually in pain and eager to change—that is to say, by patients rather than by subjects who have volunteered for an experiment.

The dangers of superficial diagnosis are especially apparent in dealing with college-age youth. Once a therapist gets past the first, conventional response, he is apt to find, as Hendin did, that young people at this stage of their development are wont to picture their parents in extreme terms. It is only after a reasonably long period of therapy or in the course of normal maturation that a more balanced picture emerges. Probably the parents of some of these youngsters are indeed as destructive as their children make them out to be, but in many other cases Hendin's respondents may well be engaged in defensive maneuvers designed to conceal more than they reveal.

Then there is the perennial question of the psychiatrist's own bias,

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a question which has become acute in much of contemporary psychohistory, and particularly in studies of the youth culture. One need only recall the spate of articles on the student movement appearing in the last few years, most based on questionnaires that had been so designed as to cause student radicals to emerge, by definition, with humane, anti-authoritarian qualities. All too often the acclaim which has greeted these works is based less on the data they offer than on the beliefs which they share with their middle- and upper-class audience, as well as with the reviewers who act as cultural middlemen for that audience. In this respect Hendin is not nearly so tendentious as, say, Keniston, Erik Erikson, or Robert Jay Lifton, but he too has a vision of American life that informs most of his case studies and that all too often seems to take the place of really hard evidence. (Why, for example, in a purportedly scientific work does Hendin not include the results of those Rorschach tests and TAT's which he administered to his respondents and which he claims support his findings, though we have no way of judging whether or not this is so?)

This is not to deny Hendin's point that the current generation of young people does seem considerably more confused and disoriented than the generation of the 1950's, though other observers of the same group have reached far less drastic conclusions. But even granting that at least some members of this generation are acting out their problems in starkly primitive and self-destructive ways, is there any proof that these problems are caused, as Hendin argues (citing Erich Fromm), by the culture of American capitalism, with its dual emphasis on competition and the immediate satisfaction of material needs? Hendin offers no evidence that our culture has indeed become more competitive in the past twenty years; simple observation would seem to indicate that it has probably become less so.

Hendin's second major explanation for the current malaise hinges on changes in American family life that have taken place over the past two decades. He contends that, thanks partly to psychoanalysis, educated American women in the 1950's were led to expect a high degree of self-realization and fulfillment through marriage. When these expectations were disappointed, they vented their anger on their husbands and children, using the family situation as a stage for the acting-out of frustration. Hendin's basic argument here may be a plausible one, but once again he offers no evidence that women in the 1950's were any more frustrated than those in the 1940's or 1930's. In the absence of such evidence, one wonders whether he is not merely reading back into that period the conventional wisdom of the present moment.

In short, Hendin offers no really persuasive evidence that the symptoms he is describing constitute basic personality disorders, or that these disorders have been brought about by underlying features of, or changes in, American culture or family structure over the past twenty years. Without making any such drastic assumptions, the malaise he describes can just as adequately be accounted for within a psychoanalytic framework.

In the Freudian tradition, "normality" is always a tenuous balance of forces held together, in part, by the structures of authority in the larger society. Hence, a weakening of those structures can itself produce irrationalities of the kind we have recently witnessed, or bring to the surface various forms of aberrant and primitive behavior. That such a breakdown of authority has occurred over the past two decades is undeniable, and there is no lack of events in the public arena to account for it.

Something else has also happened over the past twenty years which must be taken into account. We now have in this country a large intellectual community which exercises tremendous influence over the content of the national media and from which an educated middle class (and eventually the working class as well) takes its cultural cues. This elite has, for some time, diagnosed the American condition

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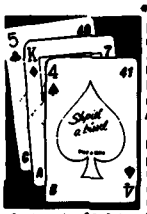

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as one of irremediable sickness and at the same time—in inevitable partnership with Madison Avenue—has advertised the notion that "self-realization" is to be found through the freedom to act on one's impulses in every area of life. It has, in other words, contributed significantly (if not always intentionally) to the public breakdown of authority.

If adolescents today appear more confused and disturbed than they were twenty years ago, this may have something to do with attitudinal changes which the intellectual community and the media have helped bring about. Given the power of unconscious forces and the relative tenuousness of any pattern of adjustment, the result has been a weakening of that capacity for sublimation which remains the one necessary requirement for rational functioning in the world. For this weakening, which may indeed turn out to have serious and permanent consequences for American society, the diagnosticians themselves must bear some measure of responsibility.

Exercise in Timidity

BEYOND KISSINGER: WAYS OF CONSERVATIVE STATECRAFT. By GEORGE LISKA. *Johns Hopkins. 159 pp. $2.95.*
THE KISSINGER EXPERIENCE: AMERICAN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. By GIL CARL ALROY. *Horizon. 189 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by VICTOR BARAS

HENRY KISSINGER'S foreign policy is an exercise in timidity. This is the conclusion reached by both George Liska and Gil Carl AlRoy in their otherwise very different books. The Secretary of State emerges from these studies as a politician skilled in delaying difficult choices and diffusing responsibility for failure. In the process, he may be undermining the capacity of future administrations to respond to the crises they will inherit from him.

Of the two books, Liska's is the more ambitious in scope. He approaches his subject from the standpoint of Kissinger's grand design (or lack of one). The present task of American diplomacy, according to Liska, is to establish a new international order that will replace the decaying structure of American global primacy. "If the object is retreat or retrenchment from a dominant or paramount position, the key question is less 'How much?' than 'Where to?'" This "Where to," for Liska, calls not so much for a new policy as for a new diplomacy.

Liska proposes historical models of three kinds of diplomacy, each appropriate to a different international environment. His diplomatic paradigms are Kaunitz, Metternich, and Bismarck.

Kaunitz was the Austrian foreign minister who engineered the spectacular reversal of alliances at the start of the Seven Years' War. His achievement, it turns out, is of little relevance to the problems of contemporary America, and Liska includes him mainly for the sake of completeness.

As between Metternich and Bismarck, the two remaining models, Liska finds the Metternich system inappropriate to the U.S. Metternich represented a declining power whose security could only be guaranteed from the outside. For a country as strong as the U.S., says Liska, the danger of Metternichian diplomacy is the danger of the self-fulfilling premise: "The central question is whether the United States has indeed already become a relatively declining power in material and psychological capacity . . . and whether the conservative design is not such as to initiate that decline (if it had not set in already) or aggravate and deepen it (if it had)."

Liska, then, argues strongly for Bismarck, or rather for an American diplomacy that he calls "Bismarckian." The U.S. in his view ought to become the active center of a dynamic "global equilibrium." In its role as leader of an equilibrium, America would not merely be one among a number of actors

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VICTOR BARAS, *a new contributor, teaches political science at the Graduate Faculty of the New School in New York and is an associate of the Russian Research Center at Harvard.*

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in a new balance of power, or simply a senior partner in a new network of alliances; rather, the U.S. would have the initiative in structuring and restructuring the pattern of international "concert and confrontation."

In Liska's view, Kissinger's diplomacy has decayed from its hopeful Bismarckian beginnings to an uninspired Metternichian routine. This means, above all, that Kissinger has failed to follow up on the opening to China. In addition, he has done little to clarify America's relations with its allies, who have acquired considerable independence from the United States with no commensurate increase in responsibility. Nor has Kissinger capitalized on the opportunity to use Hanoi as a counterweight to both Moscow and Peking.

LISKA's critique is clearly different from the standard "hard line." He does not accuse Kissinger of selling out to the USSR. His objection is rather that Kissinger, by concentrating on the Kremlin, has neglected to develop various other relationships necessary to a global diplomatic strategy. The effect has been to discourage the emergence of active and responsible alternative centers of authority, particularly among America's allies. If détente turns out to be nothing more than a consolidation of U.S.-Soviet relations, Liska writes, the result may be "competitive détentism," in which the Western allies try to outdo each other in striking deals with the USSR.

It may, however, be misleading of Liska to call his own prescriptions "Bismarckian" and Kissinger's policy "Metternichian." The Moscow Summit of 1972 was not, after all, comparable to the Congress of Vienna. Nor is the U.S. free to change enemies and allies at will, as were the European monarchies of the 18th and 19th centuries. It would be a careless reader who does not take some exception to Liska's historical parallels.

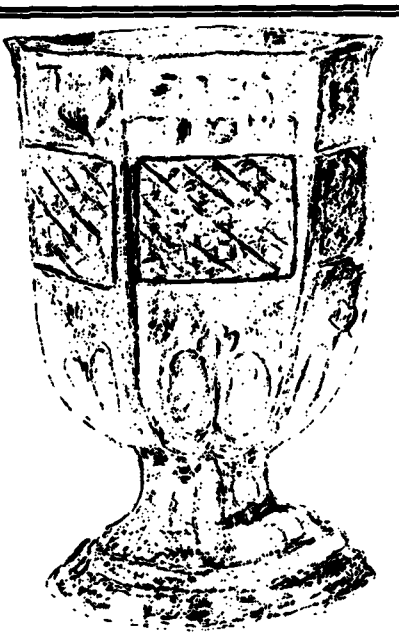
But such objections would miss the main point of the book. Liska invokes Kaunitz, Metternich, and Bismarck to make a didactic point, not a historical one. Metaphors, abstractions, and historical allusions are central to his purpose, which is to teach a way of thinking about foreign policy. In this project he succeeds remarkably well. Despite the occasional passage that sounds as if it had been translated too literally from academic German, Liska forces the reader to think seriously about the configuration of international politics.

GIL CARL ALROY's intention is different from Liska's, and so is his style. AlRoy sets out to show that Kissinger's Middle East policy has been a disaster, and he is as blunt and unapologetic as the task requires. In fact, the desire to call things by their proper names occasionally leads AlRoy dangerously close to downright name-calling; in a few unfortunate passages, his book resembles a compendium of every hostile remark ever uttered about Kissinger, including one that Kissinger is or was mentally ill. This sort of loose talk mars what is essentially a sound analysis.

The most important part of *The Kissinger Experience* is not about Kissinger at all, but consists of AlRoy's discussion of Arab attitudes toward Israel and the Jews. Drawing on published documents and statements by Arab leaders, he shows that the Arab objective in the Middle East is not only the recovery of territory or even the establishment of a Palestinian homeland but the elimination of the Jewish state. These passages need to be read and read again, especially by those Americans who, in their understandable frustration with endless conflict, have begun to imagine a secret "moderate" in every Arab leader from Anwar Sadat to Yasir Arafat.

What is Kissinger's "new" Middle East policy? It is, AlRoy maintains, one of the oldest and least successful of American plans. "Seeking American hegemony and peace in the area by wooing the Arabs with Israeli-held territory" is an old dream in Washington, he says, that has been tried by Secretaries of State from John Foster Dulles to William Rogers. It is a policy that cannot succeed as long as the Arabs remain bent on the destruction of Israel.

AlRoy thinks that Kissinger has



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been taken in by the pretense of Arab moderation, and that he is especially vulnerable to Arab propaganda because he is a timorous assimilationist, morbidly eager to prove that he does not favor the Jews over their enemies. This may or may not be true. What seems more likely is that Kissinger believes he can manage the Middle East without regard to the real objectives of the parties to the conflict. Thus he seems confident that he can manipulate both the Arabs and the Israelis in the service of an American policy that will simultaneously limit the Soviet presence and maintain good relations with the oil-producing Arab world. Needless to say, Kissinger does not wish to see Israel destroyed; yet he is willing to gamble with Israel's security in the apparent belief that if Israel's survival should be threatened, the Arabs can be prevented from achieving victory just as the Israelis were prevented in 1973. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of Kissinger's Middle East policy is the assumption that he, not to mention future Secretaries of State, can so delicately control events in that volatile part of the world.

THERE is an obvious connection between the global and the regional aspects of Kissinger's Middle East policy. He is trying to exclude the global adversary, the USSR, without relying too heavily on the regional ally, Israel. To do this he must gamble on the mercurial good will of the Arabs. Seen in this light, American Middle East policy is a good example of what George Liska calls Kissinger's "explicit pessimism and implicit optimism." He is pessimistic about America's strength and will, but optimistic that difficult relationships are evolving in a salutary direction. As a result, underlying realities of power and diplomacy are neglected in favor of a "prudential nursing of trends," vaguely expressed hopes for "normalization" cover what is at bottom a posture of timidity, and the national interest is pursued on the cheap. Both Liska and AlRoy have performed a valuable service by pointing out the dangers of such a diplomacy.

Speciesism

ANIMAL LIBERATION. By PETER SINGER. *New York Review-Random House. 301 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by MARC F. PLATTNER

THIS book begins with philosophy and ends with cookery. Peter Singer, a young, Oxford-educated professor of philosophy, attempts to convince his readers to abandon the eating of animals, and then obligingly provides them with an appendix of vegetarian recipes.

More than half of *Animal Liberation* is devoted to a compilation of "horror stories" about useless experimentation on animals and harsh conditions on "factory farms"—an exercise in muckraking that contributes nothing to establishing the soundness of the author's philosophical doctrine. But then Singer is less concerned with passing the critical scrutiny of his fellow professors of philosophy than with gaining converts to "an ethical and political movement."

As the title *Animal Liberation* indicates, Singer borrows freely from the rhetoric of contemporary radical movements. He coins the infelicitous term "speciesism"—an analogue to sexism and racism—to describe the attitudes that make possible the "oppression" of animals. His opening chapter is subtitled, "Why Supporters of Liberation for Blacks and Women should Support Animal Liberation Too." Yet it is clear that Singer is not primarily addressing blacks and women concerned with winning their own liberation. His real audience is those who unselfishly support the liberation of others.

If Singer's rhetoric is contemporary, his outlook belongs not to present-day radicalism but to the reformist tradition spawned by the philosophic radicalism of 19th-century Britain. His heroes are not revolutionaries like Malcolm X or Ho Chi Minh, but British humanitarians who campaigned against the slave trade and child labor. Similarly, the philosophic underpinnings of Singer's case derive not from Marxism or more recent revolutionary doctrines, but from the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham.

Like Bentham, Singer starts from simple and abstract moral principles and reasons unswervingly toward a series of practical conclusions. His abstract principles are essentially two. The first is equality, which for him is a "moral idea, not an assertion of fact." This principle demands that equal consideration be given to every being whose interests are affected by any action. Singer's second principle, which is derived explicitly from Bentham, identifies "the capacity for suffering as the vital characteristic that gives a being the right to equal consideration." Therefore, to apply the principle of equality to humans alone, and thus to give less weight to the suffering of other beings, is to commit the sin of "speciesism."

Singer supplements this direct argument with an exposé of the "obsolete" religious, moral, and metaphysical ideas that have been used in the West to "mask the naked self-interest of human dealings with other animals." The view—common to Judaism, Aristotelian philosophy, and Christianity—that man occupies a special place in the universe, and has a right to dominion over the other animals, is no longer tenable. It has been finally and decisively refuted by the Darwinian theory of evolution. Hence there no longer remains any plausible justification for the refusal of humans to grant equal consideration to the interests of other animals.

Here the contradiction at the heart of Singer's argument becomes especially glaring. For the Darwinian theory portrays a world whose essence is an unrelenting competition for survival among the various species—a competition that routinely involves the eating of one animal species by another. The suggestion that, in such a world, any species should forsake its own "naked self-interest" to give equal consideration to the interests of other species is preposterous. In short, Darwinism may undermine the notion of a morally relevant inequality between man and animal, but in so doing it also renders ab-

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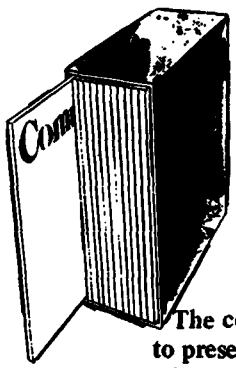

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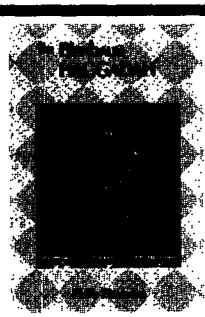

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surd the notion that man has any moral duties toward other species.

A similar contradiction inheres in Singer's appeal to Benthamism. For once the moral sphere is reduced—as Bentham reduces it—to calculations of suffering (or pain) and enjoyment (or pleasure), what reason is there for men to diminish the sum of their own enjoyment in order to lessen the sufferings of other beings? Singer's simplistic invocation of equality is hardly an adequate answer. If the principle of equal consideration is to be more than merely an abstract "moral idea" without any force, it *must* be based on an "assertion of fact"—i.e., on some actual equality that makes possible a genuine community of interests among the beings concerned. Such a community clearly can exist among men, who are capable of acting morally toward one another. But there is no possibility of moral reciprocity —and hence no genuine equality —between men and animals.

Singer would undoubtedly respond to this argument with a tactic he employs throughout his book against all claims that there is a morally decisive inequality between man and animals. He poses the following dilemma: if we are justified in using animals for food (or for medical experimentation) because they are incapable of acting rationally or morally, aren't we equally justified in using irreparably brain-damaged, abandoned infants in the same way? To continue eating animals, while opposing the eating of defective humans, is in his view to be guilty of blatant "speciesism."

But let us suppose Singer is right in contending that, without recourse to religious conceptions, moral philosophy cannot demonstrate that we have more stringent duties toward severely brain-damaged infants than we have toward animals. This would merely mean that by refusing to eat or experiment upon defective humans—perhaps from sentimental or instinctual motives—we are acting more generously toward them than strict obligation would require. Such generosity may be labeled "speciesist," but how can it possibly be considered reprehensible?

Singer's aim in likening the moral status of animals to that of severely retarded humans is obviously to encourage gentler treatment for the former, not harsher treatment for the latter. No doubt with equally benevolent intentions, he compares the situation of animals on factory farms to that of black slaves on Southern plantations, and the work of medical researchers who experiment upon animals to the horrors perpetrated by Nazi doctors in concentration camps. Yet these kinds of comparisons are not only morally repugnant, but also dangerously irresponsible. They are less likely to extend men's moral sympathies to pigs or rats than to weaken the inhibitions that restrain their behavior toward other human beings.

Indeed, it is rather remarkable that thinkers like Singer are themselves such ardent altruists, so great is the delight they take in debunking all those religious and metaphysical assumptions that grant human beings a special moral dignity—assumptions that have served most men as the very basis of their duties toward others. Why they should then expect men, now presumably stripped of moral illusions, to extend their moral obligations to a hitherto unheard-of degree, is a fascinating question for psychologists.

Decline and Fall

TWILIGHT OF AUTHORITY. By ROBERT NISBET. *Oxford. 287 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by PETER P. WITONSKI

"*Mundus senscit*"—the world grows old—was the phrase employed by Gregory of Tours in the 6th century to describe the twilight of the Roman Empire. Like many of his troubled contemporaries, Gregory clearly perceived the coming of a barbarous age, and in his almost pathetic words one senses the helpless and weary resignation of a wise and learned man in the

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hour of his society's greatest misfortune. The coming of twilight was for Gregory an event that was both irrational and uncreative; his simple words lend immediacy to one of the oldest and most disturbing phenomena in history—the decline and fall of great civilizations. It is a theme that has been pondered by a diverse assortment of philosophers, historians, and seers since antiquity.

In our own century the problem of civilizational decay has enlisted the labors of a number of celebrated thinkers. The dour prognostications of Spengler, Toynbee, and Voegelin have, despite their jargon-ridden complexity, found a large and eager audience. The vaunted "idea of progress," like the Pelagian heresy, has proved a weak competitor when matched against man's seemingly innate capacity for pessimism. One of the simplest, most persuasive, and least ponderous treatments of the subject was penned over seventy years ago by the political philosopher Max Nordau. In his neglected masterpiece, *Degeneration*, Nordau echoed the unhappy resignation of Gregory of Tours as he speculated on what fortune had in store for the 20th century. Eschewing the dogmatism of his fellow pessimists, Nordau succeeded nevertheless in painting a convincingly bleak picture of the future. "In our time," he wrote, "the more highly developed minds have been visited with vague forebodings of a Dusk of Nations, in which the sunlight and the starlight are gradually fading, and the human race with all its institutions and achievements is dying out amidst a dying world."

Degeneration became a best-seller in several languages. One of Nordau's American admirers, the eccentric journalist Albert Jay Nock, was so impressed by *Degeneration* that he proposed, in a widely circulated essay, to write a study of the question: How do you go about discovering that you are slipping into a dark age? As a self-described superfluous man, Nock considered himself well equipped to deal with the question; but he decided in the end—after pondering the actions of his contemporaries and finding them wanting—to cultivate his own garden and leave the deep inquiries to others.

I mention both Nock and Nordau because Robert Nisbet's latest book, *Twilight of Authority*, is written in the style of those two thinkers. Although Nock is only mentioned once in Nisbet's pages, and Nordau not at all, *Twilight of Authority* is suffused with the spirit of them both. Indeed, even Nisbet's literary style reminds me of Nock, and while he does not share Nock's contempt for his fellow man, he seems to be in general agreement with him on one crucial point: that we are in fact already living in a barbarous age. How we came to slip into this sad situation is the subject of his book; his treatment of the subject would have more than satisfied the high standards of Albert Jay Nock.

Periodically, Nisbet writes, Western history has been visited by twilight ages. In these periods genesis and development give way to decline and erosion:

> Something like a vacuum obtains in the moral order for large numbers of people. Human loyalties, uprooted from accustomed soil, can be seen tumbling across the landscape with no scheme of larger purpose to fix them. Individualism reveals itself less as achievement and enterprise than as egoism and mere performance. Retreat from the major to the minor, from the noble to the trivial, the communal to the personal, and from the objective to the subjective is commonplace. There is a widely expressed sense of degradation of values and corruption of culture. The sense of estrangement from community is strong.

The twilight age, like the Anaximandrian "moment of perishing," is a time of social disintegration, a Dusk of Nations, a dark and barbarous episode, a time when the words uttered by Gregory of Tours take on special significance since they describe a feeling widely shared.

The concept of a twilight age is, of course, a relative one. Every age, as the late George Sarton once wrote, is a time of perishing and of genesis, a dark age and a renaissance. This fairly obvious fact is what makes history interesting. The so-called Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, cited by Nisbet as a typical twilight age, provides an excellent example. Was it a time of

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rebirth, as the historians Jules Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt interpreted it, or did it represent, in the phrase of Johan Huizinga, the "waning of the Middle Ages"? Was it an age of secularization and theological mitosis, or of transcendental reaffirmation and missionary zeal? The most astute witnesses to the Renaissance—the sources of Nisbet's own view of the period—recognized the great scientific and artistic accomplishments of the age, but they also recognized its political shortcomings. Indeed, Machiavelli's longing for the glories of the old Florentine republic, destroyed, he believed, by the power of the Medici family, is not all that different from Nisbet's longing for the old American republican virtues. And Nisbet's despairing view of 20th-century America is adumbrated in the writings of yet another Florentine political theorist, Francesco Guicciardini. "We cannot call a city unfortunate, which, having flourished for a long time, at last sinks into obscurity," Guicciardini observed. "For that is the end of human things. . . . But those citizens are unfortunate whom fortune has caused to be born during the decline, rather than the prosperous days of their country."

The ideas here expressed are evocative of the way all men in twilight ages view their plight, and Guicciardini's attitude both toward the decline of society and the forces that brought about the decline is strikingly similar to Nisbet's. It is a profoundly conservative attitude, and it is one that has been restated in the writings of such singular conservative thinkers as Hooker, Burke, de Maistre, and Coleridge, all of whom pined, as does Nisbet, after some paradigm of their society, a utopianized version of the unhappy present, but a utopia located in the past rather than the future.

One must make the distinction here, as Nisbet does, between conservatism and mere rightism. Rightists and conservatives have often shared common ground and fought common battles, but they are not necessarily consanguineous. In America today the Right, from intellectuals like Milton Friedman and William Buckley to politicians like Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater, has argued within the context of the classical liberal tradition. Its mentors are such thinkers as John Stuart Mill and William Graham Sumner. Nisbet, by contrast, has always placed himself within the grand tradition of classical conservatism, and has drawn on the writings of Burke, Coleridge, and Burckhardt for inspiration. Like all classical conservatives Nisbet places the good of the *polis* above some abstract theory of liberty: that is, he stresses the primary importance of virtue, authority, order, and community above the benevolent spirit of the invisible hand.

Twilight of Authority is Nisbet's most purely conservative statement to date, a somber, despairing work, full of the kind of nostalgia for the *ancien regime* that one would expect in such a treatise. For Nisbet the root of the problem lies in the ancient conflict between freedom and authority. He shares the Hegelian view that true freedom is a freedom that limits itself, yet "remains with itself and does not lose its hold on the universal." Unfortunately, Nisbet laments, Americans, in the process of "doing their own thing," have lost hold of the universal, and have ceased to place the kinds of checks upon their collective appetite that are so necessary for the survival of true liberty and equality. What we are witnessing in our time, Nisbet writes, "is rising opposition to the central values of the political community as we have known them for the better part of the past two centuries: freedom, rights, due process, privacy, and welfare." The contemporary age, he declares, has accomplished the things that Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Bentham only dreamed about. Today the political order elicits from its citizens the kind of loyalty that prior to the French Revolution was more likely to go to other institutions in society, such as the family, the social class, the church, and even the town.

As Nisbet surveys the "present accelerating tendencies toward political Leviathan on the one hand and moribundity of the social order on the other," he asks whether it is still possible to reverse the situation. "Nothing about us at the moment," he notes, "offers much encouragement. We live, after all, in a world that becomes constantly more militarized, more power-oriented, and hence more dangerous to America and other Western countries." Nisbet is, however, optimistic; he believes that it is not too late to return to the true roots of our community's social order. Nisbet's optimism is based upon his faith in the genius of American pluralism. He recognizes that the pluralistic tradition—juxtaposed as it is against the twin "idols" of necessity and politics—will be difficult to revive, but he remains convinced that it will, nevertheless, reassert itself: "The ravages of the social and cultural landscape . . . are bound to become so great, and so visible, that there will be no other way for human beings to turn than to some kind of rebirth of a . . . pluralistic philosophy."

I share both Nisbet's desire for a pluralistic revival and his evaluation of America's present predicament. Therefore I must confess that I cannot bring myself to share the muted optimism with which he concludes his book. The values of American pluralism as defined by Nisbet—individual and social autonomy, decentralization, an acceptance of a natural hierarchy among men and their institutions, and an emphasis on the importance of tradition—are, to be sure, the main sources of our greatness as a people; but one need only peruse the pages of the *Congressional Record* to see how far we have moved away from these roots. The *terribles simplificateurs*, with their penchant for the ephemeral and the deciduous, seem to have won the day. When Nisbet writes of the "sterilization of cultural diversity, the extinction of localism, regionalism, and the whole private sector," he is describing a society that would seem to have receded too far into the twilight to return to its original genius.

But Robert Nisbet sees through the twaddle of our age, and in so doing he is performing a vital task. His position is a lonely one, that of an "obsolete worshipper of freedom," as Nisbet's hero, Tocqueville, once described himself. One can only hope that it will be made less lonely by the readers of this book.

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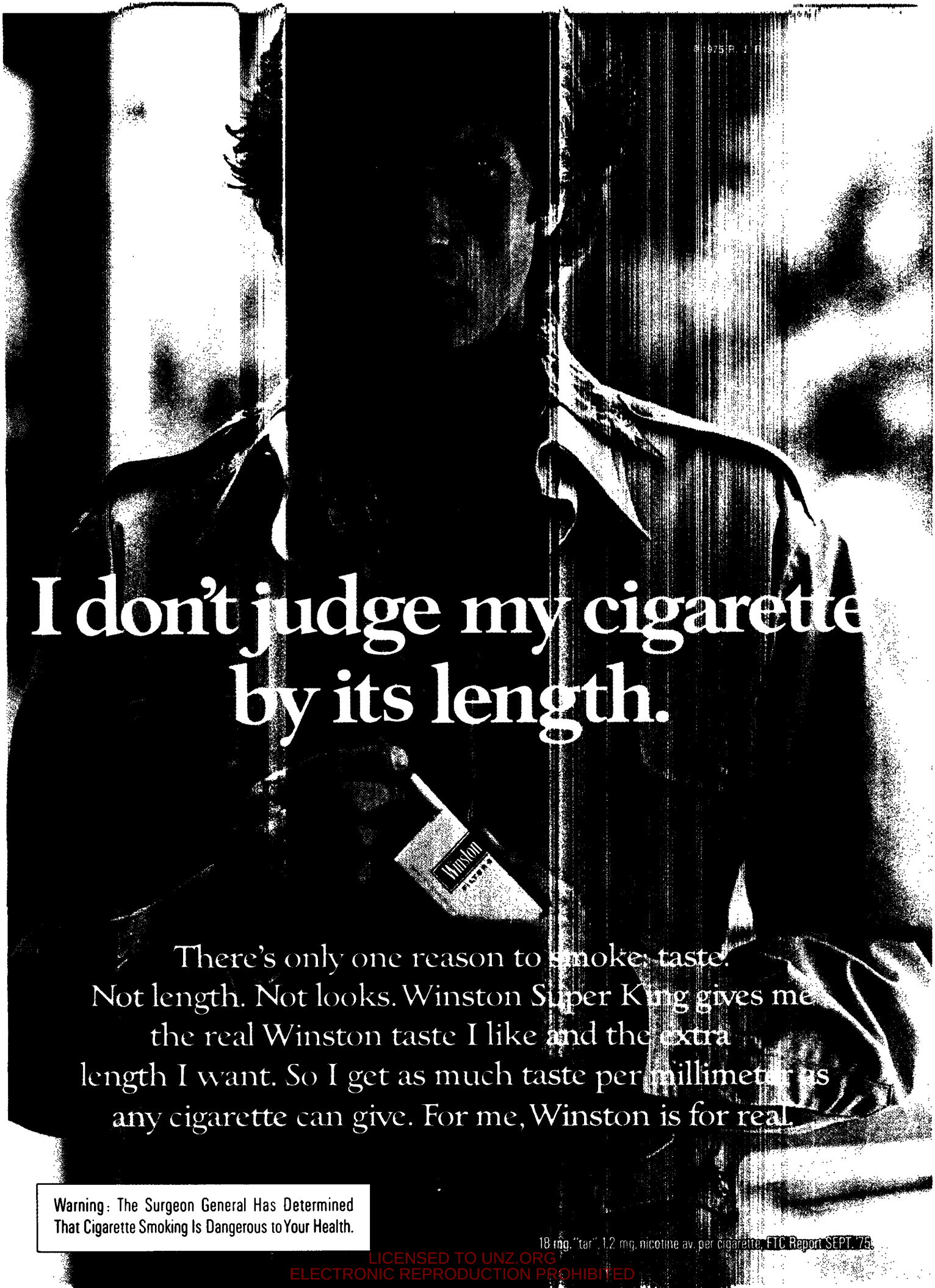
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